

Practical Sermons

By the late REVEREND

Mr. *DANIEL WILCOX*,

PREACHER of the GOSPEL in *Monks-
Well-Street, London.*

V O L. III.

The SECOND EDITION.

In TWO PARTS.

PART I. Containing Eleven Sermons never before published.

PART II. Containing all the Sermons that were published by the Author in his Life-time.

To which are added,

The CONFESSIO N OF FAITH delivered at his Ordination to the Ministry; and a DISCOURSE on the Duty of holding fast the Form of sound Words.

He being dead, yet speaketh. HEB. xi. 4.

L O N D O N:

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Eleven Sermons, which compose the former part of this third volume, were never printed before; and are one more than what the publisher's proposals gave ground to expect. They may be depended on as genuine compositions of the same reverend and worthy Author with those in the two other volumes, and the latter part of this. They all breath a most excellent spirit of seriousness, and an affectionate concern for the everlasting welfare of precious souls. They are plain practical discourses, duly tinged with evangelical doctrines, on which account they are excellently calculated, by the blessing of God, to subserve the interests of pure undefiled christianity, in a corrupt degenerate age, to impress the consciences of guilty sinners with an affecting, humbling, sense of their sinfulness and misery as fallen creatures; to direct them to Christ, and encourage their humble confidence in the mercy of God through him; to comfort such as mourn in Zion; and to guide them, with other believers, in the way of holiness and salvation. I know of no Sermons extant, that are better adapted to answer the most valuable ends mentioned than these, (I mean all contained in the three volumes) whose late worthy Author was, indeed, a scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven,

The P R E F A C E.

heaven, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, a painful labourer in the Lord's harvest, and a very successful, as well as fervent and judicious preacher of the gospel. If I mistake not, the Sermons of gospel ministers ought to be both evangelical and experimental; and not only so, but practical, rational and argumentative. Of all discourses such are the most likely to do good: And of this kind are these Sermons of the late Rev. Mr. D. Wilcox; which, that they may be read by many, and by none without pious pleasure, and abundant spiritual advantage, is my sincere desire, and earnest prayer to that God, who is the giver of all grace, and can render Reading as well as hearing an effectual means of faith, holiness and comfort.

S. H.



S E R-

[I]

S E R M O N I.

The Good Man's Privileges and Character.

P S A L M LXXXIV. II.

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield :
the Lord will give grace and glory :
no good thing will he withhold from
them that walk uprightly.*

IN these words we have a description of God :

I. By what he is :

II. By what he will bestow.

I. By what he is : *The Lord God is a sun and shield.* He would be conceived of, and his people shall find him, what is represented by these : *A sun*, to enlighten, quicken, guide, and comfort : a never-failing fountain of light and life, which, after the freest emission of its refreshing rays, abides always full. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, &c.* James i. 17. In

him all our springs have their rise, from him all our blessings flow. None can be sad that have his smiles : by his favour we live, and his loving-kindness is better than life. And as he is *a sun* to bless with all good ; so *a shield* to secure from all evil : able to defend and succour, protect and save, all that trust in him, and will not fail those that do so.

II. The description takes in what God will bestow. *The Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

The Lord will give grace ; which comprehends all spiritual blessings necessary to the change of our miserable state, and corrupt temper ; his pardoning mercy thro' his Son, and the renewing sanctifying Impressions of his spirit, in a new heart, or a heart to repent, believe, and turn to God by *Jesus Christ* : The first principle of the divine life, and the further degrees of it, by necessary supplies from the same Spirit, directing, assisting, quickening, comforting and sealing such as are the peculiar objects of his love. And the same Lord that gives grace, *will give glory* too ; bring his people to that happiness in heaven, which on earth he disposes and makes them meet for. *Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.* Their felicity shall not be confined to the narrow limits of the present life ; but as their desires, and hopes, run beyond to eternity, there will he provide for their compleat satisfaction. Them on whom he bestows his image, he will bring to his presence ; even to that presence where there is
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fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

The Lord will give grace and glory: and lest this should not be enough to express his love, 'tis added, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly; that is, every thing that is good will he freely bestow on persons of this character. He has all things in his hand, and at his disposal. No finite mind comprehends the treasures of the divine goodness. As to what is in reversion and hope, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. And at present, he will supply all their need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, Philip. iv. 19. Whatever conduces to their present real advantage, or future happiness, that will he give; either sanctified riches, or contentment in poverty: either deliverance and freedom from troubles, or patience under them, and profit by them: either longer space to enjoy the mercies, and improve the advantages of the present life; or freedom by death from threatening evils, to join the perfected spirits of the just, and be with Christ, which is far better. We have all sum'd up, 1. Cor. iii. 21, 22. For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all, saith the Apostle, are yours: upon this ground, that ye are Christ's; for Christ is God's.

The persons for whom God will do this, are describ'd by their *upright course* (which presupposeth their renewed state and happy relation to God) to denote the way established by God's wisdom

and grace, in which men are to expect such great things as are here promised. Now this description may be of use, to take down the vain presumption of careless unrenewed sinners, and to encourage sincere Christians to keep up their hope in the divine goodness, notwithstanding lesser failures, against the bent of their hearts, and repented of afterwards.

Blessed be God, we are under a new covenant, so well and wisely ordered, for his glory and our comfort. *Perfection* is what the law requires; and he is no saint that wishes not to be entirely free from sin, and doth not unfeignedly strive after exactness in holiness. But when after all endeavours, we fall short, to the grief of our souls, those lamented defects are pardoned to all that believe in *Christ*; their justification and covenant interest in the divine favour, are continued, and their sincerity accepted, or graciously rewarded. So merciful a God, so compassionate a Father do we serve, as the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ* is.

We may now take notice of the endearing manner in which God will bestow the promised blessings, *viz. freely*, without, and contrary to, all merit in us; tho' in a certain order fix'd by himself. *The Lord will give grace and glory*. All things pertaining to life and godliness are given *freely*. Eternal life is the gift of God, with whatever prepares for it, and leads to it. How dear soever it cost our Lord to purchase the blessings of the better covenant, they are all free to us. *Not by works of righteousness; which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, from*

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first to last. *Love* is the spring ; the divine good-pleasure the reason of what he bestows ; and on whomsoever he bestows it, 'tis to the praise of the glory of his grace. So that the Text promises what is the sum of the saints happiness, and ensures to them the treasures of earth and heaven : It shews by whom, and in what manner true happiness will be bestowed ; as also, the ground of their hope, and the supply they shall have by the way, till they arrive at final and compleat blessedness. No good thing will God with-hold, but freely bestow every desirable blessing on them who walk uprightly ; to the doing of which he is ready to assist us by his Grace. The rigour of the first covenant is abated ; and after the violation of it, we who believe on *Christ*, are restored to a state of hope. Tho' our innocence is lost, and sinless perfection in this life unattainable, the sincerity of penitent believers shall be graciously accepted, and mercifully rewarded.

The words of the text, then, are as a voice from heaven, inviting us up thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe, and follow, the joyful sound.

Am I in *darkness*, and Fear, I shall never find the way ? Open thine eye, O my soul ! look up to the father of lights : *the Lord is a Sun*, whose steady beams shall direct thy steps.

Is there an inward veil to be removed from my mind, as well as Obscurity from my Path ? He is sufficient for both. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. He

can make the day dawn, and the day-star to arise in our hearts; (2 *Pet.* i. 19) and by *both*, guide our feet into the way of peace. *Luke* i. 79.

Doth the same light that discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what enemies and dangers I am to go thorough? Hear, O my soul, *the Lord is a shield*. Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth *Abraham*. *Gen.* xv. 1. *Fear not: I am thy shield*. Do I groan under a sense of my unmeetness for the heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, *the Lord will give Grace*. Am I altogether unworthy of so high a happiness? It springs from his own most free unbounded Love; *The Lord will give glory*. Am I urged with a thousand wants that need supply, what more can be added? *No good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly*. Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a fountain opened; Here thy eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be for ever at rest.

The words of the text give us the reason of the different desires and choice of the godly and the wicked. The wish, that each of them make, you have, *Psalms* iv. 6. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?* This is the cry of the men of the world, who have their portion in this life; But the Psalmist, and all holy men, unite in this, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*. And what reason they have for

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for it, is evident here; *for the Lord God is a sun and shield*; who can and will shew them the path of life, and guide and protect them in walking therein.

The happiness desired by the short-sighted sensualist, is terrene and temporary; springs from earth, and will perish with it. Large crops and full barns, fruitful showers, and a warm sun, the fading enjoyments of this lower world, bound their hopes: but the refined soul aspires higher, looks upward, and knows upon what ground he prays, *Lord lift up the light of thy countenance: for the Lord will give grace and glory*; grace, which can only suit and satisfy their spirits now, and glory to receive them when they go hence. The sense and hope of this may well put more gladness into their hearts, than others experience *in the time that their corn and wine increase*, Psal. iv. 6, 7.

Here is the wisdom of the saints regulated by eternity. God is their portion by the most deliberate choice; *He*, with whom is the fountain of life, and who will abundantly provide for them in both worlds; for their safety and comfort *here*, and their compleat blessedness *above*.

The Lord will give grace, &c. Here you may consider,

I. *All mankind are in a state of alienation from God, as to his life and likeness*; at enmity with him, and by apostacy liable to his wrath; universally corrupt and turned from him; not subject to his law, devoid of his love and image, and "dead in trespasses and sins." *Rom. iii. 9, 10, &c. Ephes. ii. 3.*

2. *Among this corrupt mass*, GOD hath a chosen number, whom his eye pitied in their foreseen misery, and whom he resolved to save, in a way becoming his majesty, by giving his SON to be their Redeemer, through whom he is now carrying on the purposes of his love.

3. By Christ's dying, justice is satisfied, God reconciled; and, as an instance of it, a new covenant is established in his blood, wherein pardon, peace, justification, adoption, and endless glory are offered to all that return unto God in the appointed way. To this end, repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are strictly required by the highest authority, on pain of forfeiting all the before-mentioned blessings, and falling under greater condemnation.

4. *Notwithstanding this*, such is the natural depravity, the hardness and obstinacy of our hearts and wills, that *we need the special efficacious grace of God to work us up to a compliance with the proposed terms, and bring us into a covenant state.* 'Tis by the peculiar efficiency of the divine power, and display of his victorious grace, that his people are made willing and savingly changed. They are *born of God*, from above, *from heaven*, to shew the author of it. Again, 'tis set forth by *regeneration, a resurrection, a new creation, the father's drawing*, and that by the exceeding greatness of his power, like that employed in raising Christ from the dead. *Ephes. i. 19, 20.*

5. *The divine power and grace, thus necessary, shall, in the appointed way and time, be infallibly exerted and displayed, for the actual recovery of all*

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all God's chosen; effectually to call and convert them, and work in them that faith and repentance that he requires, in order to their entering into a state of favour and reconciliation, being pardoned, justified and accepted with him.

This may be concluded,

1. From God's eternal purpose, which shall never fail.

2. From his absolute promise, which we have *Ezekiel xxxvi. 26. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh.* So *Jer. xxxi. 33.* "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." They that would have God for their God, must have *new hearts*; which because none can attain of themselves, and yet God will have a people in the world, therefore he undertakes to prepare them for himself, and to work *that* in them that he plainly requires. He knows whom his purpose respects as to the bestowing of this grace, and his faithfulness will suffer none of them to be forgotten.

3. This is the design of Christ's death, and his special intention in it, *viz.* to purchase saving grace for his *sheep*, for whom he laid down his life: and his blood shall not be spilt as water upon the ground without fruit. *Tit. ii. 14.* For this has he his name *JESUS*, because he was to save his people from their sins. *His people, those that the father had given him.* For their sakes he is said to sanctify himself, and in consideration of his

his great undertaking, 'tis promised, *Isa. lii. 10.* "When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, see the travel of his soul and be satisfied." As to this Christ is express, *John vi. 37.* "All that the father hath given me shall come to me;" and therefore the divine power shall be exerted to draw them.

4. This is farther secured by his prevalent intercession, which he ever lives to make. *John xvii. 17.* *Father, sanctify them through thy truth.* Nor is his request confined to those that are already called, but extends to all others. *Ver. 19, 20.* *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

'Tis to this end he has promised to be with them to the end of the world: to continue his gospel and ordinances, as the ordinary means of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Lastly, the SPIRIT, as the Redeemer's agent, will fulfil his office, and accomplish the errand for which he is sent into the world, *viz.* to convince and renew, quicken, and raise to a life of grace, all that shall be heirs of salvation. *John xvi. 9.* "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law;" that the blessing of *Abraham*, the great blessing of the promised spirit, may be bestowed on all the redeemed, to quicken them with a divine life (the life of grace) as the pledge of, and preparatory to, the life of glory, *Gal. iii. 13.*

APPLICATION.

I. Will God give grace to any of the children of men? How merciful is his nature! how astonishing his love!

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How ravishing does it sound that there is yet hope for lost sinners! that his eye pities us in the misery brought upon ourselves! that he will freely overcome that distance at which we had set ourselves from him, undertake to repair his image, restore us to his favour, when we were all over depraved by sin, liable to eternal death! How plain is it, hence, that "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy."

2. How much doth God desire the salvation of men; in that, when all had sinned and come short of his glory, and deserved to be left, he would not only offer to be reconciled on the most reasonable terms, but undertake for a certain number to give them the grace necessary to their compliance with them. When all had violated the first covenant, and were condemned by it, who ever expected to have heard such an offer and resolve as this, as to any of the guilty race, *I will give grace!* But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.

3. Has God a kind design to give grace to lost sinners; *examine*, has this design been accomplished as to you? Have I a new heart given me? A new spirit put within me? Am I begotten again? Am I washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of God? Am I, by repentance and faith, brought into a covenant relation to him, made partaker of a divine nature? Is God become my God? Am I in the number of his people?

Here I would speak to two sorts of persons.

1. To such as never experienced this grace.

(1.) Here you are directed to whom to go for it,
viz.

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viz. to God : The Father of lights and mercies, from whom every good and perfect gift doth proceed.

(2.) Diligently attend the use of all those means which God hath appointed, and with which he is wont to set in. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for 'tis God that worketh with you to will and to do, of his own good pleasure,* Philip. ii. 13. So *Prov.* viii. 34, 35.

(3.) Let this be your encouragement to hold on in prayer to him, waiting upon him in the appointed way, that God hath declared his purpose to give his special sanctifying grace to some, and you have no reason to conclude against yourselves, that you are none of the number. Where there is an heart to look after grace, there is good reason to hope we shall obtain.

2. To you that have experienced this grace.

(1.) Remember *what* you have received, and *from whom* ; and let God have all the praise.

(2.) Still depend upon him that is the *Author*, to be the *finisher* of faith ; and having been made partakers of his grace, according to his purpose, keep up a lively hope on his promise as to the heavenly glory. He that gives a *new heart*, will bring to the *new Jerusalem*. And this shall always be my prayer for you : “ That your God “ would count you worthy of his calling, and “ fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and “ the work of faith with power.” *To him be glory now and ever.* Amen, 2 *Thess.* i. 11.

S E R M O N II.

The Good Man's Privileges and Character.

P S A L M LXXXIV. II.

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield :
the Lord will give grace and glory :
no good thing will he withhold from
them that walk uprightly.*

SEVERAL inferences may be added to those in the foregoing Sermon ; as,

1. Will God give grace and glory ? — This assures us, there is a reconciliation made, a passage open between heaven and earth ; that the offended Deity, from whom we could expect nothing but *wrath*, is become the *God of Peace*, and deals with us on terms of endearing mercy.

By our apostacy and rebellion we had forfeited all good ; as guilty and depraved, were unmeet for heaven, and without hope of it, children of wrath, and bound over to destruction, *Rom. iii. 23. vi. 21.* Justice unsatisfied stands as an immovable bar in the way of our happiness ; stops the fountain

fountain of the divine favour from flowing down on guilty sinners, till the Supreme Majesty has a recompence made him for the affront offered, the wrong and dishonour done him by the violation of his law. Now this he has received ; and is well pleased in the offering made by his beloved Son. In him, *justice* and *mercy* have met together, *righteousness* and *peace* have kissed each other, the honour of the divine perfections and government is secured, and highly advanced. Upon this the heavens clear up ; and instead of threatening a fiery storm, smile upon us with a favourable aspect. The everlasting kingdom is opened, and the blessing of the spirit promised to fit us for it ; which supposes and proves our redemption from the curse of the law, which would have cut off all sanctifying renewing influences from our souls for ever ; stopt the current of all favourable communications from a Majesty still offended, to guilty creatures. But *peace* being made, the treasures of the divine goodness are now open, 2 Cor. v. 18. " All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by *Jesus Christ*." *All things* necessary to our recovery, the making us *new*, and making us *happy*. He sanctifies as the God of peace, 1 Thess. v. 23. and as such, works in us what is well-pleasing in his sight, and perfects what he has begun : and on the same ground will he exert his power for the conquering and subduing our spiritual enemies. Rom. xvi. 20. " The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet " shortly."

Peace is the comprehensive sum of all happiness, and the foundation of all. As *dew* descends from

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from a clear sky, so *grace* from a reconciled God.

This, O my soul, is the language of every comfort I receive, every mercy I enjoy ; which, God bestows to assure thee of his good-will, and draw thee to himself : He deals not with thee as an angry judge, but as a gracious benefactor, to encourage thee to return unto him. But *spiritual* and *eternal* blessings more abundantly proclaim and evidence *this*. “ I will give grace and “ glory, holiness and heaven,” is the voice not of an unappeased Majesty, but of a God in *Christ*, reconciling the world to himself.

2. Will God give grace and glory to lost and perishing sinners ? how valuable a blessing is the *gospel*, whereby life and immortality is brought to light, 2 *Tim.* i. 10. How distinguishing a privilege do they enjoy who live under the clear revelation of the good-will of God towards men : whilst others are ready to perish for want of vision ? We have more in this one line of the Bible, *the Lord will give grace and glory*, than the dim light of nature could ever discover.

That we may be recovered from our lapsed state, and attain that glory we had forfeited by sin ; on what terms 'twill be conferred ; and to whom we are to go for strength to the performance ; that God is reconciled and ready to receive returning sinners ; hath provided for them an everlasting kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, and is willing to communicate his grace to fit them for it, &c. What ravishing discoveries are these ! What better news could God send to man !

Whatever

Whatever conjectures the rest of the world may make of his favourable propensions towards men, in that he spares, sustains, and feeds them, causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, giving them fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness; 'Tis only his special declaration that can make known his abundant mercy, as reconciled through Christ. Well may the Psalmist cry out, *Blessed is the People that hear the joyful sound*, Psalm lxxxix. 15.

O my soul, doth not so peculiar a blessing deserve and call for thy special praise? Does it not become me to be highly sensible of, and thankfully own, the divine goodness in disposing my abode? How pleasantly are the lines fallen to me in a *land of Bibles*, where the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation, and I can read or hear from his own mouth, *the Lord will give grace and glory*. Doth not my heart sometimes pity, and seem to melt over, them who are born or cast in the remote corners of the earth, where they are in darkness as to their *misery* and *remedy*, whilst mine eyes behold the light of life, and the joyful sound is oft repeated in my ear? And shall I not praise my God, by whom the difference is made, and earnestly beg of him, that I may not only have a revelation, but a real interest in the things that concern my peace.

Then is the *Gospel* a blessing indeed, and matter of everlasting praise, when it becomes, "the power of God," the instrument of that power, to the salvation of those to whom it is sent.

3. Will

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3. Will God give grace and glory? hence learn the infinite value of the blood of *Christ*, and our inconceivable obligations to *him*.

The blood of his cross is not only the foundation of our peace, but the price of our happiness; of powerful efficacy to reconcile, and of extensive merit to procure salvation, with eternal glory.

This, O my soul, is the grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who, tho' he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich, 2 *Cor.* vii. 9. He emptied himself of his glory that I might be filled; poured out his blood that the fountain of life and grace might flow forth to me; underwent the pressures of his father's wrath, that I might be restored to the embraces of his love, and all the fruits and effects of it.

What love and praise do I owe him! What eternal obligations am I under to him! What joy will it be to be with him, in the glory he hath purchased; when I shall be more sensible of his love as leading to, the love of the father, and perfect happiness in it, and shall be swallowed up in love and praise for ever!

4. Will the Lord *give* grace and glory? then his mere good-pleasure is the spring and source of his peoples happiness and hope: the reason of our salvation, both as begun and perfected.

Whilst in a natural unrenewed state, we can do nothing to deserve his grace; might justly be left by him unholy and miserable, as fallen angels are. By wilful transgression we are liable to his wrath, and have no merit or motive to oblige or allure him to save us from it. But he will

have mercy on whom he will have mercy. *Rom. ix. 18.* "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and tho' this be our meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, yet even *that*, too, is freely bestowed. *The wages of sin is death, but eternal life is the gift of God. Rom. vi. 23.*

5. Will the Lord give grace and glory? This shews that his immense goodness is the measure of what he bestows. There is no proportion between what we can do for God, and what we receive from him. He is a Being every way perfect, and loves to act like himself: If he builds, he will make a world; if he saves he will divide the sea; if he threatens, 'tis an everlasting hell; and when he promises, 'tis eternal life in heaven, with whatever is necessary in the way to it. *The Lord will give grace and glory.* He hath already displayed his love in giving his Son, and will now make known his abundant mercy in supplying the wants, satisfying the desires, providing for the complete happiness, of his people according to his riches in glory by *Jesus Christ*. They shall certainly be most blessed whom God undertakes to make so.

6. Will God give grace and glory? Learn hence that *regeneration* is above the power of nature: nor does *salvation* depend on the variable inconsistent will of man.

Could we recover ourselves, when fallen; or create a new heart; what need had God to have taken the work into his own hand? And seeing he

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he has so, how sure is it that he will accomplish his design, perfect what he has begun, and fulfil all his pleasure? - "His people shall be willing in " the day of his power ;" sweetly, tho' efficaciously and infallibly, brought over to him ; called according to his purpose ; habitually sanctified ; and separated from the world ; and at last received to the prepared kingdom.

7. Will God give grace and glory ? Hence I infer that the souls of men are of great excellency and worth.

What does *grace* import, but the image of God ; the participation of the divine nature ; a being filled with his fulness here, *Eph. iii. 19.* and *glory*, but the dwelling with him in the heaven of heavens, the cœlestial temple, the presence-chamber of the Deity, the mansion of bliss and joy : and how valuable is that being which the Most High will so highly honour in time, and provide for to eternity ?

8. Will God give grace and glory to certain of the lost and sinful race of mankind ? Hence learn that despair is very unreasonable. Be humble, O my soul, in a sense of thy weakness and unworthiness, but do not despond, or sink. Cast the anchor of hope in the ocean of divine love. Look up with trust and dependance to the Father of lights from whom every good and perfect gift descends. Every thing comes from him by way of *gift*, and those gifts are, like himself, *perfect*. I am indeed, *less than the least of his mercies* ; yet am encouraged to hope for the *greatest* upon his own offer, and he takes pleasure in those that do so. *Psalms cxlviii. 11.*

I own, and lament, my unmeetness for the heavenly kingdom ; and find I need a power above my own, to purge out the corruption that hath overspread my soul, to change and turn me into the way of holiness, and keep me in it. But I can turn to the place where he hath proclaimed, “ I will sprinkle water upon you, and I will “ cleanse you : a new heart also will I give you, “ and a new spirit will I put within you, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25, 26. And when *omnipotency* undertakes the work, who would doubt the accomplishment ? In the multitude of my thoughts within me, as to weakness and unworthiness, what comfort may it yield to delight my soul ? *The Lord will give grace and glory.*

9. This informs us that God is the proper rest, the suitable portion, of an immortal soul.

His perfections can only suit our spiritual natures, fill up our capacities, satisfy our desires, and run parallel with our very being.

Here, we move in a circle of vanity and vexation; placing our affections on that which is not ; are mock'd and disappointed with a thousand shadows, and always shall, whilst we pursue a happiness which bears no proportion to that spiritual substance which we carry about us.

Arise then, O my soul, “ Return unto thy “ rest.” Wherefore do I spend money for that which is not bread ? and my labour for that which can never satisfy ? Why should I feed on husks any longer, when in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, and he has promised to replenish the weary and sorrowful soul with the fruits of his love. *The Lord will*

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give grace and glory. How fully do these words answer the necessity of my case?

Say then, O my soul, I will arise and go to my God and Father, in whom my true and adequate happiness lies. *Psalms* iv. 6. Whilst others pursue the enquiry in a world of vanity, *Who will shew us any good?* Let this be my request, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* This will create more gladness in my heart than earth can give: the fore-taste of what is to be more fully enjoyed above.

10. Will God give grace and glory? Hence learn the method of salvation, and how much of the divine wisdom appears in it. How vain are the hopes of glory hereafter, without grace and holiness here?

Lastly, Will God give grace and glory to certain of the sinful race of mankind? How great an honour is it to be employed by him in the converting and saving of souls? With what vigour and delight should they hold on their work, serving the kind designs of love, and never faint or grow weary, having this ground to go upon, *The Lord will give grace and glory?*

But let me apply myself a little further, to such as have not been made partakers of divine grace, and so not brought into the way to eternal glory. And that this may be managed with profit, 'tis necessary we should know the state of our case.

Here, therefore, a previous enquiry should be made, *viz.* Am I destitute of the saving grace of God, or in the number of those who are made

partakers of it? Am I an heir of the promised glory, or without a good hope of it?

Is it not time, O my soul, to come to a resolution in so weighty an affair? Can I live at an uncertainty, to whom I belong? Whither I am going? Where my everlasting abode is like to be? Shall I put off the search to an indifferent hereafter, when this night my soul may be called away?

Is not the question, *Have I grace or not?* of the same import as *that*, supposing I should presently die, Whether I should be saved or lost? Be received to heaven, or bid lie down in hell? Be eternally happy, or everlastingly miserable? And should not the thoughts of this awaken me presently to look into my state, and make me serious and faithful in it? Should I decline the trial when I have the strongest encouragement to it? If it should appear that I am yet in an unrenewed state, I am not past hope: I am under the Gospel; and this is the joyful sound, the blessed proposal it makes, *The Lord will give grace.* If the divine Spirit has been at work within, and I can discover his footsteps, how ravishing will it be to hear, the Lord will give glory too?

Come then, O my soul, into the light. Are the marks and characters that describe the children of God to be found in me.

A little to assist you in the search:

In general,

Are all old things done away, and all things made new? 2 Cor. v. 17. Is it otherwise with you than once it was? They that say, they never knew a time wherein they were not *regene-*

Ser. II. *Privileges and Character.* 23

rate, may do well to question whether they were ever brought in to it, unless an even thread of holiness has run through their whole course from the first, as a proof of their early, thorough renovation. And so great is the change made by the grace of God where it has been bestowed in elder years ; so signal the difference in heart and life from what we were, and what others are, as may be discerned by scripture light, by such as are willing to know their case.

Supposing therefore I was conceived and born in sin, and sometime remained under the power of it, in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, is it otherwise with me now ? What change have I experienced within ? How does it appear without ? Have I other *thoughts* and apprehensions of things, being freed from my former darkness, and made light in the Lord ? Have I another *mind* and *judgment* ? a different frame and workings of heart and affection, discourse, and conversation suitable to these ? Is the *old man* put off, as to his dominion and rule, and the *new man* put on, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, *Eph. iv. 24.* Is there a new heart evidencing itself in newness of life, the end for which it is given, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27 ?*

But to be more particular :

1. Were you ever sensible of your sinful corrupt condition, so as to be humbled under it, and made to loath and abhor yourselves upon the account of it ?

2. How are you affected as to *indwelling sin*, and the remains of corruption ? This is that that

makes believers groan, and of all things renders their stay upon earth most grievous.

O my soul, how is it as to this? While others pour out their grief for outward crosses, do I feel my inward malady, and mourn over it? Do I pray as heartily to be freed from *sin* as others from outward sorrow and affliction?

3. What is your esteem of holiness, and how is it evidenced in your endeavours after greater conformity to your pattern and rule?

4. How are you affected towards such as are yet in a sinful unrenewed state? Do your hearts melt over them? Do you pity and pray for them, and earnestly endeavour the conversion and salvation of all about you? Do you bear your children and relatives on your heart to the throne of grace, crying as Abraham, O that such may live in thy sight. *Gen. xvii. 18*?

Grace is of a communicative nature; inspires the breast, in which it is, with the most tender compassion and truest affection, which will be expressed in desires and endeavours to promote the eternal happiness of others, and in order to it, that here they may be truly holy in heart and life. This is the apostle's request, in which he breathes the spirit of a saint: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," *Thess. v. 23*.

5. Are you willing to come in to the light; to be tried by the impartial rule, or do you decline and hate it, from consciousness of guilt, and fear to be stop'd and disturb'd in the state and course you are in? This is a mark laid down by our blessed Lord, *John iii. 21*. "Every one that doth evil hateth the light."

6. How

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6. How do you stand affected as to the word and ordinances? What longing have you after them? What delight in them? With what design and desire do you attend upon them?

7. How are your hearts suited to secret spiritual duties? those that lie between God and your own souls, and relate to the workings of the thoughts and affections. What inward grief and sorrow have you upon account of *sin*? What humility in a sense of your vileness and corruption? What desires have you after God? What exercise of love to him, trust and dependance upon him, care to please and keep up daily intimate communion with him, as one you have more to do with, than with all the world besides?

8. How are you affected to *Christ*, the purchaser of grace, through whom it is bestow'd, and by whose spirit it is wrought? Such as are made partakers of saving grace cannot but adore and love *him*, have high thoughts of *him*, and bless God for *him*; remembering with thankfulness his astonishing love, sufferings and death, and what they owe thereto; the prevalency of his intercession, and what they have received therefrom, and further hope to do.

O my soul, can I look upon myself as an heir of the grace of life, *grace* as leading up to *glory*, and shall not that Redeemer be infinitely dear to me, whose blood is the price of all?

9. How are you affected to the *saints*? Doth the grace of God appearing in them, the image of God impressed upon them, recommend them to your love and esteem, how low or mean soever in the world?

10. What

10. What delight do you experience in God and his ways? *viz.* How do you stand affected towards *heaven*?

Do your desires move upward, are your motions and operations directed that way? Do you think with pleasure of the perfect state and work which all there are advanced to; the holiness and happiness; the purity and glory that fill that world?

Do you long, and breathe, and daily aspire, after perfect conformity to God, and perfect blessedness in him, so as never to be quiet or satisfied with any thing else?

This is suitable to the temper and experience of saints. "Our conversation is in heaven." *Phil.* iii. 20. And where the saving grace of God is bestowed, it will beget in the soul a tendency to the enjoyment of him in endless glory.

Thus I have endeavoured to help you to understand your case; whether you have that *grace* which 'tis here proclaimed, *the Lord will give*, or are yet destitute of it.

Let me desire you to treat the matter with solemnity, like persons upon the brink of an everlasting world; to be tried and adjudged to the inheritance of the saints in light, or to utter darkness, as you are found in a state of *grace* or of *sin*.

Set yourselves, therefore, in the presence of God, with your Bibles before you, and beg of God to make you serious and faithful, and by his convincing spirit, direct and enable you to bring the matter to an issue.

Let

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Let me only add a word by way of *soliloquy*.

And is it plain, O my soul, that I am destitute of the divine *grace*, without a title to, or meetness for the *heavenly glory*? How deplorable is the state in which I have hitherto lived! And shall I any longer continue in it? Shall I not presently arise and go to my Father, and owning my sin and misery, in the deepest humility, but with supporting hope, cry for mercy?

O how reviving is it to hear, *The Lord will give grace*; *grace* which I want, and can never be happy without: That 'tis the Father of mercies with whom I have to do: That the Lord will give; he whose power and goodness are always the same, and always infinite; able to cure and heal my soul; recover and bring me up, how low soever I am fallen, and willing to do so.

Observe, O my soul, how the proposal runs. *The Lord will give*, freely bestow, his *grace*, which I so greatly need, and can never deserve? What comfort is here in every word, against my *weakness* and *unworthiness*? If the *Lord* will *work*, let me not question his *power*: If *he* will *give* with whom is the fountain of life, let me not distrust his *goodness*.

To him let me direct my eye, and the desires of my soul: At the footstool of his throne let me bow my knee: To him let me send my earnest repeated prayers, and give him no rest, till I hear that joyful, reviving word drop from his lips, *My grace is sufficient for thee*: sufficient to pardon and purify, heal and save thy soul.

And

28 *The Good Man's Privileges, &c.* Ser. II.

And do I thus pass into the number of those blessed ones, to whom the divine principle is communicated : I who was sometime *darkness*, am I made light in the Lord ? *sick*, but am I now healed ? *dead*, but now made alive ? *alienated from the love and life of God*, now by grace restored to *both* ! O my soul, what a change have I undergone ! Shall I not adore, and bless God for this ! Shall I not love, and trust, and delight in him ! O my God, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ; and there is none upon earth " that I desire besides thee." Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise " thee." Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all " that is within me bless his holy name." *Bless the Lord, &c.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

God the All-sufficient Portion, and Choice
of his Saints.

P S A L M LXXIII. 25, 26.

*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and
there is none upon earth that I desire
besides thee. My flesh and my heart
faileth : but God is the strength of
my heart, and my portion for ever.*

THESE are the words of a saint, upon a
serious survey of both worlds, fixing on
God as his portion, or chief good. They ex-
press the sense of soul with which such an one
first comes to God, and afterwards renews his co-
venant with him. The Lord's portion is his peo-
ple, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* and he also is theirs : Their
choice of him is hearty and particular. *Lam. iii.*
24. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."
And the text is expressive of the satisfaction they
have in him, such as they have in none else.

The

The Psalmist, as one of the people of God, is here directing himself to him, asserting his interest in him, and this in a manner that speaks his esteem of him beyond whatever could be named in either world, as standing in competition with him. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

Whatever there may be desireable in either world, earth or heaven, holy souls are carried to God, as in whom alone they can find satisfaction. This is a truth felt by the generation of them that seek him. God in providences, God in ordinances; communion with him upon earth, and the enjoyment of him above, is what their hearts are set upon.

Here I shall endeavour to shew;

I. How God is to be considered, when the saints thus speak of him.

II. Enquire, what a gracious soul may have in view in this or the other world, desireable or engaging, with which yet it cannot take up.

III. Whence it is that these cannot satisfy without God, or be instead of him.

IV. What a gracious soul may be conceived to mean in looking above, and beyond all things else, and saying of God, and to him, *I have none in heaven but thee, or on earth that I desire besides thee*; and whence such a temper proceeds.

Lastly, The use.

I. How God is to be considered when his people thus speak of him; every one for himself? *I have none in heaven but thee.*

(1.) Not *absolutely*, or as, in himself, clothed with majesty, armed with justice, of purer eyes than

than to behold iniquity, inclined to punish it, and by almighty irresistible power able, in the most terrible manner, to do so. For thus considered, he may well be said to be a *consuming fire*; and convinced sinners cannot thus think of him without being troubled. The display of his glorious perfections, strikes terror into their souls, apprehending him their enemy: And how can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong, in the day that he shall deal with them? *Ezek. xxii. 14.*—“ ’Tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;” for who knoweth the power of his anger? according to his fear so is his wrath.” This *wrath*, upon the account of *sin*, we are by nature liable to; and should he deal with us according to the rigour of a broken law, we could no way escape. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord who shall stand? *Psalms cxxx. 3.* This therefore the Psalmist deprecates, *Psalms cxliii. 2.* “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” The consideration of an absolute God, is what his own children cannot bear. ’Tis not, therefore, under this notion that one of this number speaks of him with so much satisfaction, *Whom have I in heaven but thee.* But,

2. As *God in Christ*; as having set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and, thro’ him, manifested the greatest love to us, or a readiness to bestow the greatest blessings upon us. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“ life.” *John* iii. 16. Thus, “ God commend-
 “ eth his love to us, in that while we were yet
 “ sinners *Christ* died for us.” *Rom.* v. 8. And He
 “ that spared not his own Son, but delivered him
 “ up for us all, how shall he not with him also,
 “ freely give us all things? *ch.* viii. 32. How ami-
 able, attracting, and endearing, is the discovery
 made of God in *Christ*? How full of compassion is
 he for lost sinners? unwilling they should perish,
 and earnestly desirous of their happiness in the
 method taken to bring it about? *Fury is not in*
him: there is plenteous redemption with him;
 he is ready to have mercy, and abundantly par-
 don: he is the Father of mercies; the God of
 all grace and comfort, 2 *Cor.* i. 3. His name
 and nature is Love, 1 *John* iv. 3. His *throne* is
 a throne of grace, encompassed with a rain-bow,
 the emblem of *peace*. Our way to him is open;
 the ground of our fears removed; his thunder
 laid by, that his terrors might, no more, make
 us afraid. “ Mercy and truth are met together,
 “ righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”
 God as the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, ap-
 pears with a smile upon his face, good-will in his
 heart; the richest, or most desirable blessings, in
 his hand. And thus under the light of the know-
 ledge of his glory in the face of *Jesus Christ*, the
 believer is led to say with the Psalmist in the text,
Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c. Thus they
 joy in God through *Jesus Christ* our Lord, by
 whom we have now received the atonement,
Rom. v. 11.

II. We are to enquire, what a gracious soul
 may have in view, in this or the other world,
 de-

desirable or engaging, with which yet it cannot take up.

1. To begin with the World that is nearest to us. *There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee* : No person, no thing ; not deliverance from present evil, or enjoyment of temporal good ; nor, added to these, the ordinances and means of grace, the external privileges of God's house. How desirable soever these are in themselves, how little could they signify without God ?

1. *Deliverance from present evils*, as sicknesses, pains, losses, disappointments, &c. How desirable in itself would be a freedom from *these* ? But how poor a thing to a saint is all this, to be exchanged for the presence and favour of God ? How far would it be from giving satisfaction to such an one, who much rather would chuse affliction with the people of God, that have God near to them, than live in other respects in the greatest ease in the world, disquieted with the thought of being without God ?

2. Another thing desirable in itself, is the *enjoyment of temporal good* ; riches, honours, money, friends, and all requisite accommodations for pleasure and delight. This is what the world admires and earnestly pursues. And, in some sense, the Psalmist pronounces them happy, in regard to these outward privileges, *Psalms* cxliv. 15. " Happy is the people that is in such a case." But if the account stops there, he seems to correct himself, and presently adds, " Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." There be many, says the Psalmist, that say, " Who will
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“ shew us any good ?” But he would not have his portion with them. Instead of that, he prays, “ Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us,” as what would put more gladness into his heart than others ever experienced, even in the time that their corn and wine increased, *Psalms* iv. 6.

3. To things in themselves desirable here, may be added, *the ordinances and means of grace*, the external privileges of God’s house. How earnestly doth *David* desire these ? What delight has he in them ? How hardly doth he bear a banishment from them, and envies the birds that were admitted nearer God’s house and altar than he ? *Psalms* lxxxiv. “ One day, with him, in God’s courts, is better than a thousand ;” and so it is with every saint. He had rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

How vehemently does his soul run into this : “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” But what is it for ? only to sit under ordinances ? no ; but to behold the beauty of the Lord, *Psalms* xxvii. 4. For this he declares, *Psalms* xlii. 1, 2. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?* *Psalms* lxiii. 1, 2. *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the*

the sanctuary. Without this, no freedom from evil, or enjoyment of outward good, or external ordinances, can amount to what the holy soul can take up with. In whatever degree these are enjoyed without God, it would still say, this will not do. *There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

2. Let us look higher, to *heaven*. Here are many things desirable, but such as the saint could not find his happiness in, short of God.

The glory of the *place* is transcendent: the *inhabitants*, angels, and the perfected spirits of the just; how desirable to be like them, there to join and dwell with them; to be equal to them? But these are but additional to the saints blessedness. The fulness of joy lies, in the presence of God, and in being with Christ. This is that which was promised to them, and which all along they counted upon. As for me, *I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Psal. xvii. last Verse. *Saints*, are called *heirs of God*, as he himself is to be their inheritance, and portion; and being so, notwithstanding all that can be named desirable above or below, *such* will keep their eye and heart upon *him*, and say, *Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee.*

III. We are to consider, Whence it is that no other good can satisfy the saint, or be to him instead of God? Nothing can make his people happy, but himself. If we look over *heaven* and *earth*, take a view of every creature, or put them all together, after all they could be to us or do

for us, we shall find reason to say with the Psalmist, O my soul, *Return unto God thy rest*. Psal. cxvi. 7. For,

1. That which satisfies or makes us happy must be *suitable and adequate to our natures*, fitted to reach the heart, and every way perfect, and so sufficient to fill it: Now this can't be said of any created good.

Our souls are spiritual, and their desires boundless; and who but he, whose perfections are infinite, can suit or satisfy these? This is the encouragement God gives *Abraham*, *I am God all-sufficient; walk before me and be thou perfect*. Gen. xvii. 1.

God is a *good all-sufficient*, containing in himself whatever is desirable: And as the *title* agrees to none but God, nothing in the world beside can be a satisfying felicity. Leave God out, and whatever you take in, the heart will still be capable of desiring more. *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase*. Ecclesiast. v. 10. As nothing can be the *perfection*, so nothing can be the *satisfaction* of the soul, but he that made it. It will never be at rest till it rest in God. There's no full contentment in the way, and our only *home* is God himself. No good but the chief can suffice.

2. That which satisfies, or makes us happy, must be *firm and unchangeable*. But of whom or what can this be said but of God only? He made, and maintains, the whole world; and should he withdraw his hand, how soon would it sink into nothing? The heavens and the earth shall

shall perish ; they shall wax old as a garment and at last be changed ; but God is the same, in his *being* and *perfections* ; able to support and comfort all that have an interest in him at all times, and in every age and place. *With him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.*

3. The soul is *immortal* ; and the good that satisfies it must be *everlasting*.

We must live for ever, but not *here*. The present world must be left at death, and we taken from it into an eternal state : But God is from everlasting to everlasting, and so the only proper portion of his people in both worlds. None in heaven, nothing upon earth, can be to them instead of God.

IV. As no lower good can satisfy, or be in the stead of God, we proposed to shew what the gracious soul, in renouncing *these*, and turning to God, is aiming at, and may be conceived to mean in saying, *I have none in heaven but thee ; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

I. That which the gracious soul is aiming at, is, communion with God here, and the enjoyment of him above.

(1.) *Communion with God here* ; having access to him, through his Son, by the help of his spirit : sending their desires after him, and receiving supplies of light, life, and pledges of love from him, whereby they may be enabled to say, “ Truly “ our fellowship is with the Father, and with his “ Son Jesus Christ.”

(2.) *The future, full, enjoyment of God, above.*

Communion with him is what is most to be desired upon earth ; this the saint can't but greatly value and prize ; but there is something higher reserved for heaven, which he is farther aiming at, longs to be acquainted with, and is pressing towards. We *now* walk by faith and not by sight ; but there is a state where we shall see face to face, and know as we are known ; and this the soul is aspiring to, looking to God as its centre and rest, saying, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ?* Which, as to its import, includes such things as these :

(1) *Whom have I but thee*, that I should chuse, and prefer before all the world, as infinitely better in thy self, and able, and willing, to be better to me, and do more for me ?

(2.) *Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee*, that I should so much delight in, be pleased with, and of whom my meditation should be so sweet ? *Psal. xvi. 5, 6, 7. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel.*

(3.) *Whom have I*, in either world, *but thee*, that I should unfeignedly resign to ; and consent to be governed by ? As I have been continually with thee, notwithstanding all my weakneses, and thou hast holden me by my right-hand ; thou hast hereby given me reason to conclude, *Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* *Psal. lxxiii. 23.*

(4.) *Whom have I in heaven, or earth*, that I should love *but thee ?* in comparison of thee, or any

any otherwise than *in thee and for thee*? This, thy love and grace through thy Son, thy love and grace to me, call for, and make it infinitely due. I here own the debt, acknowledge the obligation, and would make some suitable returns of love and duty. For,

(5.) *Whom have I in heaven but thee*, to call upon, direct my homage and worship to?

As thou art a God hearing prayer, that to thee all flesh should come, hast opened a new and living way of access, through the veil of thy Son's flesh, and appointed him our advocate with thyself; I can want nothing but thou art able to bestow, be liable to no evil but thou canst secure me from, meet with no trial but thou canst carry me through, and hast abundantly declared thy compassion and love. Wherefore, let who will grow strange to thee, or turn aside to any else, "I will make mention of thy name, and "of thine only."

6. *Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee*, to trust and hope in? Thy name is the Lord JEHOVAH, in whom is everlasting kindness and strength; And they that know thy name, will trust in thee at all times; amidst the greatest dangers, under the sorest longest trials, for all the mercy and grace to help that thou hast promised in a time of need.

Lastly, *Whom have I in heaven but thee*, that I most long to be with? I see nothing upon earth, for which I should desire to stay here. O happy time, when I shall leave this place of trial, and probation, and exchange *desire* for *fruition*! O that every day I may have clearer dis-

coveries of *thee*; and ere long be taken up to be for ever with *thee*.

This is the Import of the language the Psalmist here uses. A being able to speak which from the heart, is owing to several things.

(1.) The change that the holy soul has past under, in being born of God. The *new nature* in his children, as it comes from him, so it leads to him.

(2.) The experience they have had of the insufficiency of any thing in the creature to yield satisfaction without God. *I have seen an end of all perfection. Psal. cxix. 96. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, all is vanity. Eccles. xi. 8.*

(3.) The comfort and satisfaction the holy soul hath found in God, more than in all the world besides, determines to this. *Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. O my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*

S E R M O N IV.

God the All-sufficient Portion, and
Choice of his Saints.

P S A L M LXXIII. 25, 26.

*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and
there is none upon earth that I desire
besides thee. My flesh and my heart
faileth: but God is the strength of
my heart, and my portion for ever.*

HA V I N G, in the foregoing verse, quitted
the whole creation, and professed his
choice of God as infinitely better to him than
all; he, here, records the benefit he had by him,
under all that he felt, or was subject to. *My
flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength
of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Accord-
ingly we may take notice of two things.

1. The low languishing state he mentions, as
what either was or might be his own. *My flesh
and my heart faileth.*

I

2. His

2. His remedy in that state that gave him relief. *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

My flesh. By this understand the *Body*, or outward Man. This is daily decaying, and tending to dust from whence it was taken. I feel my vital heat and moisture abate: ere long *both* will be consumed, and the lamp of life expire. This is sure, and cannot be far off: And what will certainly and speedily be, may be spoken of as my present case.

My flesh faileth. I feel the earthly house of this tabernacle grow weaker and weaker, and thereby have sensible warning that 'twill ere long drop down. But this is not all.

My flesh faileth, and so does my heart too. My body droops, through pain and weakness, or the weight of diseases; and my soul, under its most grievous pressure, is ready to be overwhelmed, and sink. This is the dark side of his case, which having mentioned, he turns to what is more bright and comfortable.

But God is the strength of my heart, or, according to the *Hebrew*, the *rock* of my heart; that on which I rest and am safe, by which I am supported and born up. The *Seventy* read it, *the God of my heart*, it being as *my God*, that he is *my rock*, and strength. *The strength of my heart.* My flesh faileth, and must fall into the dust; but God will be mindful of my *better part*, and, in my greatest extremity, succour and provide for my *soul*. When leaving the world, and launching into eternity, he will make up in himself all I can leave behind, and make it worth
while

while to die, to go to him. When I can expect no succour from any creature, as *going through the valley of the shadow of death*, in God I have never-failing support, and never-ending felicity. Let who will share the world among them, God is my portion; and this is not for a limited time, but to eternity.

This the Psalmist fixes upon as the ground of his support, and utters with pleasure as what he could trust to, and take comfort in, living and dying.

In speaking to this, I shall briefly consider,

I. The notion of *death*, here mentioned, as what such as are dear to God have experienced, and others must expect, viz. *the failing of the flesh*.

II. That when the flesh is failing, the heart may be ready to fail too.

III. That under the forest trial God will strengthen the heart of every one of his people.

IV. The living supports saints raise to themselves in a dying hour, from the consideration of *God's being the strength of their hearts*, and *their portion for ever*.

I. We are to consider the notion of *death* here mentioned as a *failing of the flesh*. *My flesh faileth*. Those two dear companions, *soul* and *body*, how closely soever joined, must undergo a separation: Tho' constituent parts of the same person, they are not of equal stability. The *body*, as a house, is subject to decays; and by neglect or violence may be rendered unfit for the *soul* to inhabit, and so is left by it; the spiritual inhabi-

tant removes, and the building is dissolved ; the tabernacle put off, which is *our dying*. The *flesh*, tho' now animated by a living soul, will not be *always* so. *My flesh faileth* : And it may be said to do so.

1. *Continually* : *My flesh faileth*, or is *failing*. This is true of it from the first moment of life to the going forth of our breath, by which we die. There is no time or place in which it can be said our *flesh and heart is not failing*, and tending to a dissolution. *We die daily* ; are gradually decaying, and wearing away. All the pains and aches we feel ; the infirmities that creep upon us ; the dim eye, and trembling hand, tell us, that *our flesh is failing*, and has been so from the first moment of life.

2. *Universally*. The Psalmist, here, speaks it *of himself*, but shews what is true of every one. The life of every man and woman in the world is declining, the *flesh failing* ; the breath going forth. And, taking in the compass of the world, perhaps not an hour wherein some or other are not actually dying ; and such as survive, are so much nearer following them as they have lived since.

3. *With great variety* : In some *early*, as soon as they begin to appear : In others, *in their bloom* ; with others, *not till the shadows of the evening are stretched out*. In some, the *earthly tabernacle* is *gradually* impaired ; and it is taken down *leisurely*, and with a gentle hand ; they are snatched away without any warning, and from an invisible cause, which is like a house's being suddenly

blown

blown up. Now the language of this is, *therefore be ye also ready.*

4. *Flesh fails most certainly*, and without possibility of prevention. No means or helps, whatever success we have seen of them, will always avail to preserve the most useful desirable life from coming to an end; or keep soul and body together. *Eccles. viii. 8.*

5. *Flesh fails swiftly*: 'Tis but a few days at longest that the soul will abide in it.

It may be said to the youngest and strongest, now breathing, *What is your life?* *It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away,* James iv. 14. Job xiv. 1, 2.

6. *The flesh is failing*, and shall actually fail, and our souls remove, *in the season God hath fixed.* Our days are determined: *The number of our months is with him*; tho' wisely hid from us. *Job xiv. 5. Ch. vii. 1.* Tho' the body is continually wasting, and nature decaying, it shall hold out to the period set, and beyond that none shall be allowed to go.

Lastly, In death the *flesh fails irrecoverably*, as to its being restored to its former state upon earth. *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment*; by which our *eternity* is fixed, as to joy or misery, according as we well or ill improved the life we once enjoyed. *This*, how frail soever, is to be *our all*, in point of trial and preparation for another. The glass run is no more to be turned, nor life restored. Thus *their* flesh have failed who are dead before; as it will with us when our hour comes: Suitably to which

which *death* is called *a going hence, so as to be seen no more.*

So much for the first thing. The notion of *death* here mentioned, *the failing of the flesh*, as what such as are dear to God have experienced, and others must expect.

II. When the *flesh faileth* in a dying hour, the heart may be ready to fail too.

This may proceed,

1st, From our putting far from us the day of our dissolution, and promising ourselves a longer stay upon earth than God has allowed.

Tho' a *saint* does not take up his rest upon earth, yet how little haste do they make thither, when they conclude they have many years to sojourn below. The *wise* as well as the *foolish virgins* slumber and sleep; and when the cry is made at midnight, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*, no wonder they are put into some consternation, to have the summons given so much sooner than was expected!

2. When we find our *flesh failing*, we may be in the dark as to our title to the life to come, or our meetness for it; and oh! how sad to think of going out of this world, when we have no evidence of a better?

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable; and what concern must it give to speak with hesitation whether our hope extends farther. There is a heaven provided, but I am not without my fears whether I shall be received into it. I have had time to make my calling and election sure; but how am I now at a loss about it!

3. When

3. When *flesh is failing*, the soul must remove into an unchangeable state : And oh ! with what a weight doth that come upon the heart !

4. *Conscience*, in our last moments, may be awakened to revive the sense of past sins ; under a sense of which the heart may be ready to fail.

When they search their hearts, under the apprehension that they are going to appear before God, how much *corruption* may saints themselves discover, and this of greater strength than they imagined ; which may breed doubts whether it was ever mortified, and fears lest it should not be pardoned : And who can think, without trembling, of going to appear before God, when matters are not clear between him and our own souls ?

5. *Satan* may be sometimes permitted to add to the doubts of the departing saint. This, if let loose, he is very ready to do. He knows he cannot follow them to heaven, and therefore endeavours to send them mourning thither. If they escape him *now*, he knows that they are out of his reach for ever ; and therefore the last conflict is often sharp. When the eye of *conscience* is open, he will paint sin in the blackest colours, to make the deeper wound.

Lastly, God may withdraw the light of his countenance ; and, in that case, when the *flesh faileth*, no wonder the *heart* is ready to fail too.

If God be for us, who can be against us. If he speak peace, who can give trouble ? but when in a dying hour we apprehend him turning away his eye in displeasure, or looking on with a frown, it can't but be hard to bear up. But this they shall

shall not be left under, without seasonable and sufficient grace. For,

III. Under the forest trials God himself will be strength to the heart of every one of his faithful servants.

This the Psalmist could witness for *him*, and shall be vouchsafed to others that stand in the same relation to *him*.

This may be concluded,

1. From his *Ability* to strengthen and help, *Isai.* lix. 1.

2. From his *intimate presence* with them, and acquaintance with their case. *The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous*, to shew himself strong with reference to every one whose heart is upright with him. *2 Chron.* xvi. 9.

3. From his *love to them*; pitying them, even as a father pitieth his children; knowing their frame and frailty, and how liable the spirit is to fail before him, and the soul which he hath made.

4. From his *faithfulness* to his kind promises made to them, and on which he causeth them to hope, *Isa.* xliii. 1, 2, 3. *ch.* xli. 10.

This would lead us to the

IVth general, The *comforts* the people of God may fetch from *him*, in a dying hour, considered as, *the strength of their hearts and their portion for ever.*

1. *God is the strength of my heart*, i. e. my better part, which, as of more worth than all the world, I can't but be most concerned for. *My flesh faileth*, but *in the multitude of my thoughts within me*, upon that account, *thy comforts, O God, delight my soul.*

2. In

2. In this God they have a special propriety ; and that under the most reviving character, as *their portion.*

3. Their interest in him is continued, and their claim allowed, notwithstanding the failing of the flesh, and almost of the heart. He is their portion still, and to be claimed as such.

4. God is such a portion as there is no other, which may justly add to their relief.

What kind of portion God is, this, indeed, is what no creature can fully describe ; for, *Who by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?* Job xi. 7.

Angels, and the blessed inhabitants of heaven, will eternally be learning what God is, without arriving to an adequate apprehension. However, we shall mention some of the characters that as such belong to him.

1. God is a *most suitable portion.*

When man fell from God, he thought to find, or make to himself, a happiness in the present world ; but, whilst he carries about with him a soul, of a spiritual immortal nature, capable of something above all this world, it cannot be.

The soul of an unregenerate man, tho' amused with sensual gratifications, as united to the body, hath desires and appetites of its own, that nothing upon earth can reach so as to content ; and therefore after trial of a thousand things the cry is continued, *Who will shew us any good?* and still there will be reason for it, till it looks farther, and says, *Where is the Lord my maker,* in whom alone can be found what other objects promise in vain.

But the soul of a believer is sanctified, and as made like to God, is capable of communion with him, and breathes after it; so that whatever attempts to come into his room 'tis unsuitable and insufficient.

A saint, as made a partaker of the divine nature, looks to the author of it, and cries, *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* &c. With whatever it may be diverted for a time, it comes to this at last, *Return to thy rest, O my soul*, to thy rest in God, who alone can be a proper suitable portion. *Light* is not more suitable to the *eye*, nor *melody* to the *ear*, than God, as a portion, to holy souls. The spirit that breathes after him, not for corn or wine, or oil, but with ardent desires of higher things, he meets with spiritual blessings in *Christ Jesus* (the pardon of sin, the light of his countenance, the communications of his grace) letting out himself to such as their condition, their necessities, their desires, their prayers, call for; so that they sometimes say with triumph, *God is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.*

They could no where find what they have in him; nor can they ever be so well as with him: If *health* is suitable to the sick, or *bread* to the hungry, or *pardon* to the condemned, or *comfort* to the sorrowful, or *balm* to the wounded and dying, &c. God is most suitable to his people, being all this, and much more, to those that have him for their *portion*. For,

2. God is an *all-sufficient* portion.

Thus he speaks of himself to *Abraham*. "I am God Almighty, or all-sufficient." *Gen.* xvii. 1. He wants nothing to his own happiness; and

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and as to his people, is said to be able to do for them exceeding abundantly, above what they can ask or think, *Eph.* iii. 20.

All other portions are limited : While they supply in one instance ; they leave us in want as to another : But God is every way sufficient : We can want nothing but what is to be found in him, desire nothing but we may expect from him.

He that overcometh has a promise that *he shall inherit all things.* As the ground of which 'tis added, *for I will be his God,* which is all that both worlds amount to, and inconceivably more.

3. God is an *infinite* portion. This is the ground of his being *all-sufficient.* He must needs have enough to supply the wants, fill the desires, and exceed the hopes of his people, whose nature and perfections are infinite and unmeasurable. For in God there is infinite *mercy* to pardon ; infinite *wisdom* to counsel and direct ; infinite *power* to succour and support ; infinite *grace* to enrich and adorn our souls in this world ; and infinite *glory* to be our happiness in another.

Being *infinite*, how vastly do our thoughts and conceptions fall short of what a portion God is and will be to his people ? a portion that can never be spent or exhausted ; a portion that transcends all others. For what can all the creatures in both worlds do for us without God ? but how compleatly happy can he make his people in himself alone ? How many soever enjoy him, it no ways lessens his sufficiency to every one ; as I have

not less light from the *sun*, tho' at the same time it shines upon millions besides.

4. God, as the portion of his people, is *most safe and secure to them*.

This they shall never lose or be deprived of. They are his own words to *Abraham*: *Fear not, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward*. Gen. xv. 1. And upon this ground his people make their boast in him, *Psalms* xlviii. 14. *For this God is our God for ever and ever*. Earthly portions, how valuable so ever, may be taken from us; *health* by diseases; *liberty* by persecution; *substance* by violence; and even *life* by death: But none of these can deprive a believer of his God, and so of his portion. Whatever he loses or suffers, God is where he was still.

5. He is an *eternal durable* portion.

Lastly, As the result of all this, God is the *most satisfying, felicitating portion*; what we can never be weary of, or desire to change.

APPLICATION.

1. How amiable and great is the change that grace hath made upon believers?

Naturally they are inclined to live without God in the world, and seek their portion in lower good. But, being born from heaven, they can no longer do so. God is now more to them than all the world; and if he be not their portion, their happiness, nothing else can.

“Should all the monarchs upon earth cast
“down their crowns at my feet (said a holy
“soul that spake his inward sense) and say, all
“these are thine; I would answer, these can-
“not satisfy; why? because they are not God.”

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Should all the honours and wealth of the world be heaped upon me, I would say, 'tis not enough, because I have a *soul* to be provided for, which none of these things can suit or satisfy. I have tried what this world can do; and seeing its vanity, and foreseeing it, I can't take up with it. Nothing short of God in Christ can be my felicity.

2. This may help you to pass a judgment upon all this world, as nothing in comparison of God, and to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence, as standing in competition with him. This the wisest and best have done; and, as taught of God, have looked for satisfaction only in himself. What folly therefore are they guilty of, who will still be looking downward for a happiness; crying, amidst vanity and vexation, *Who will shew us any satisfying good*; which is to look for light in darkness, life in death. In this they lose their labour, and the poor soul is in danger of perishing for ever.

3. How astonishing is it that God should be the happiness to any in our world, who had revolted from him without cause, and center'd in the creature, as to be prefer'd before him. How pungent is his complaint upon this account, *Jer. ii. 12, 13. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord, for my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* And when we are all chargeable with this, how astonishing is it that he will, after all, be the portion of any that had thus cast
d 3 him

him off? *Lord what is man that thou art mindful of him?*

4. Is God himself the portion of any, that had turned to lying vanities, and forsaken their own mercies, how great are our obligations to the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who *suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

How desirable is it to stand in a special relation to God as his people, and to have him for our portion? God's people shall not be left without living supports in their last moments. He will be the strength of their hearts at leaving this world, and their everlasting portion when they come into another; in the prospect of which they can go off with satisfaction, earnestly desiring to enter into the joy of their Lord, and to cease from sin as well as sorrow.

S E R M O N V.

The Good Man's Desires after the House
of G O D.

P S A L M XXVII. 4.

*One thing have I desired of the Lord,
that will I seek after, that I may
dwell in the House of the Lord all
the Days of my Life, to behold the
Beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in
in his Temple.*

TH E S E Words are expressive of the temper of a gracious soul, one born from heaven, and travelling thither.

In them we may observe,

I. What the desire of the Psalmist, and so of every saint, is fixed upon, viz. *That he may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of his life.*

II. The restless working of his soul with reference to this; it being *one principal thing he desired*

fired of the Lord and prayed for, he was resolved to pursue it. *That, faith he, will I seek after.*

III. The end for which he so earnestly desired a perpetual dwelling in the house of the Lord, *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*

We may look upon the Text as setting before us the *character* and *property* of a child of God, as distinguished from an hypocrite or mere professor.---In speaking to this text I shall shew,

I. What *house of God* is here meant, in which a saint would have his dwelling.

II. Consider the nature of the desire he has with reference to it; whence it springs, and by what it is fed.

III. The aim he hath herein, *viz. to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*

Lastly, What use the whole may be of to ourselves,

I. What *house of God* is here meant in which the saint would have his dwelling.

The house of God in scripture is used to set forth God's church on earth, and the state of glory in heaven.

(1.) *God's church on earth.*

The tabernacle at first, and so the temple afterwards, was frequently called the *house of God*: For therein God dwelt, and there he promised his presence to his people, that gathered themselves together, to worship him according to his appointments, and attended at the stated seasons of holding communion with him. Thus *David* speaks, *Psal. xlii. 4. I had gone with the multi-*

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multitude, I went with them to the house of God, &c. Again, Pſal. cxxii. 1. I was glad when they ſaid unto me, let us go into the houſe of the Lord; i. e. to join with his people in worſhipping and ſerving him. The material temple or houſe of God, in which he dwelt of old, and was worſhipped by his people the Jews, was a representation of the ſpiritual houſes, i. e. the ſocieties of believers, in which he would dwell in future times, after that temple was deſtroyed. And now under the New Teſtament the houſe of God, and a Church, or worſhipping aſſembly, of his people, are all one, &c. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Ye alſo as lively ſtones are built up a ſpiritual houſe. 1 Tim. ii. 3, 5. That thou mayeſt know how thou oughteſt to behave thyſelf in the houſe of God, which is the church of the living God. And ſee ver. 5. For if a man know not how to rule his own houſe, how ſhall he take care of the church of God. Without any reſtraint to place or number, Chriſt declares, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the miſt of them. Matthew xviii. 20. And the goings of God in his ſanctuary, the manifeſtations of his preſence with his ſaints, make way for any congregation of ſuch being fitly called the houſe of God.

Thus *the houſe of God* may ſet forth in general, eſpecially to us Chriſtians, the church of God, or the ſocieties of his people that join together to worſhip him.

And when the Pſalmiſt *deſired to dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of his life*, meaning that *tabernacle* of God at *Jeruſalem* (for the temple was not yet built) he deſired it upon the ſame
account

account that saints desire “ *now* to frequent their
 “ church-assemblies, even to have communion
 “ with God. It is as if he should say, as long
 “ as I live I would gladly live in the house of
 “ God, be always near to him, have uninterrupted
 “ communion with him, be employed
 “ in hearing from him, praying to him, praising
 “ ing of him; and if there be a heaven upon
 “ earth, it is found in such works and enjoyments
 “ as these. I am no where so well as in the
 “ house of God: no *company* like *his*; no *entertainment*
 “ like *his*. Here I would be, not as a
 “ way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry
 “ for a night, but as one that belongs to the family,
 “ a stated inhabitant. I desire to dwell in
 “ the house of the Lord, and this not for a short
 “ and limited time, but all the days of my life:
 “ As long as I remain upon earth, the *house of*
 “ *God* will be my most delightful abode.” This
 is agreeable to his language elsewhere. *Psal.*
 lxxxiv. 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord*
of hosts! ver. 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy*
house: they will be still praising thee, Selah. Again,
 ver. 10. *For a day in thy courts is better than a*
thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the
house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of
wickedness. He bewails himself when driven from
 attendance upon God in public worship, as was
 his frequent affliction, *Psal.* cxx. 5. *Wo is me that*
I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of
Kedar. He speaks of himself as a sojourner,
 unsettled and uneasy, whilst at a distance from
 the house and ordinances of God; and when
 the restraint was taken off, he returned with the
 same

same pleasure that a man would do from banishment, to his home and rest, where he would gladly spend his days.

(2.) *The house of God* may denote *the state of glory in heaven.*

The Holy Ghost in scripture delights to set forth *heaven* under various representations, to help our conceptions of it, and fix our hearts upon it. 'Tis called a *country*, a *better country*; Heb. xi. 14, 16. Such as is not to be found in all this world; a kingdom which God hath prepared for them that love him. *Jam. ii. 5.* a *City*, one worthy of God, and upon account of which he is not ashamed to be called the believer's God, for he hath prepared for them a city. *Heb. xi. 16.* And our Lord speaks of it under the notion of an *house*. *John xiv. 1.* *In my father's house are many mansions.* 'Tis a *country* for its largeness and extent; and to let us know 'tis as *pleasant* as *large*, 'tis called *paradise*, *Luke xxiii. 43.* 'Tis a *kingdom* for its grandeur, a *city* for its order, and a *house* for the nearness and familiarity allowed to the blessed inhabitants. It is *an house of God* in which all his people shall live as *children* in the same family, members of the same *society*, and hold a common dependance upon the same *father*, shewing the greatest love to him, and to each other.

Under this notion the apostle speaks of *heaven*, and comforts himself with it, when expecting his dissolution, *2 Cor. v. 1.* *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with bands, eternal in the heavens;* This may well be
called

called *the house of God*; as being one of his own contriving and building, for the house of his kingdom, and for the honour of his majesty; and so a most noble work of his power and wisdom, and answerable to the most glorious ends for which it was designed.

The *firmament*, so thick set and adorned with *stars*, is but the pavement of the *outer court* of this house of God; and the glory of *this* intimates, 'tis unconceivably bright and beautiful *within*. Heaven is the house of God, as it is the place of his residence where he is eminently present, diffusing the richest beams of his glory and goodness to those that are admitted to dwell with him; and where he hath laid up for them that love him, what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive. *Beloved*, saith the apostle, *now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* 1 *John* iii. 2.

This therefore is what the Psalmist, and so every saint, further means by the *house of God*, which he was intent upon, as desirous to dwell there. He would abide not only in the *Church*, and under the enjoyment of the means of grace *here below*, but in the state of *glory above*. It was *this* he ultimately aimed at, and would not take up with any thing short of, as his *home* or *rest*. He desires to dwell in the house, the church of God upon earth; but it was that he might be training up for heaven, and prepared to dwell there. He was thankful for ordinances, and the means of grace: these he made conscience of attending upon; but was looking with longing eyes

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eyes to that world where he should be above the need of *ordinances*, and admitted to nearer converse with God and Christ than under *them*. *Praying, bearing, and partaking of the Lord's Supper*, are pleasant things, what a saint esteems more than his necessary food, and cannot live without upon earth: but yet these cannot be to him instead of heaven, being designed only as helps on his way thither.

Whilst he lives upon *earth*, he desires to live in the church of God; but he would not *here* live always. There being a better house of God in *heaven*; 'tis *there* he hopes, and longs, to dwell for ever. The glory of the Lord sometimes fills his house below, and he manifests himself to his people, so as he does not to the rest of the world; but there are brighter manifestations made to his favourites above, which therefore they are allowed to expect, and after which their desires work. These the *Psalmist* must be here conceived to be intent upon; which elsewhere he expresses his regard to, as his *final quieting happiness*, Psal. xvii. 15. *As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* How much soever he valued the present discoveries God was pleased to vouchsafe in his *sanctuary*, he received them but as earnest and pledges of something higher to succeed. He was sensible of the weakness and narrowness of his capacities in his earthly state; and that this state, when raised to the highest, was but a state of probation; and that no more was to be expected in it than was suitable to such a state: And therefore he stretches his views further, and speaks as

pe-

peculiarly touched with one that was to follow :
As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness ;
I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

He mentions his longing desire to see God's power and glory, so as he had seen him in the sanctuary, *Psal. lxiii. 2.* But tho' he thankfully remembers what he had experienced of *this*, and vehemently thirsts to be restored to it, it was not all he expected, and so he did not stop in it. *Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. There is a river that, now, makes glad the city of God ; and as refreshed with it, the gracious soul says, *'Tis good for me to draw near to God.* But the fulness of joy is in the presence of glory above ; which therefore his desire takes in, and concludes upon being brought to, *Psal. xvi. 11.* In *his house below*, they taste and see that the Lord is good, but can only be compleatly satisfied with the fatness of *his house above*, when made to drink of the rivers of his pleasure that flow at his right hand for ever.—So much for the first thing, what we are to understand by the *house of God*, as that in which a saint desires to have his dwelling, or his *church here*, and the state of glory above.

II. We are to consider the *desire* of dwelling in the house of God, that is the character and property of a gracious soul, and which in some measure agrees to all such. Every child of God desires to dwell in the house of God.

And such a subject cannot be thought unsuitable in a discourse preparatory to the *Lord's Supper*, as we are bid to *examine ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

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If you ask, what you are to examine yourselves about? The answer in general is, We must do it as to every *grace* that constitutes a Christian, and is to be exercised by a communicant at the table of the Lord; such as *repentance* for sin, *faith* in Christ, and *love* to him. But that which I am now led to speak to, is the desire found, and working, in a child of God to the house of God, as including his *Church on earth*, and afterward the *state of glory in heaven*.

No characters better distinguish true Christians from hypocrites than such as are inward. Particularly, we may be helped to judge of our state by our desire, which is as the pulse of the soul, which way it predominantly and stately works. And here I shall,

1st, Take notice of its characters, as contained in the text.

2^{dly}, Show from whence it arises, and is nourished in the soul.

1st, We may view it in the characters contained in the text, as exemplified in the Psalmist.

(1.) The desire of a child of God to dwell in the house of God is *real*, not pretended only, or professed before men, but for the truth of which he can appeal to God, and speak it before him.

(2.) 'Tis *determinate* or *fix'd*. He speaks as having all the powers of his soul *united*, and running into it: *One thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*. There were a great many other things, of the need and worth of which he could not but be sensible, but spiritual and eternal blessings are summ'd up in *this*,
I viz.

viz. to dwell in the house of the Lord ; and all other matters are disregarded or passed over in silence, in comparison of *it*, and desired only in order to *it*, and so far as consistent with it.

This *one thing* had the first and chiefest place ; was what he desired *before*, and *above*, any thing else : If he has *this*, he is *well, easy, thankful*, as if he needed no more ; but in the want of this nothing can calm or quiet his restless soul.

Hear him speak his own case, in language that nothing but *feeling* could help him to, *Psal. xlii. 1, 2. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God ?* Offer him any thing else in the room of this, 'tis like trying to satisfy the chased hart with *wind*, when ready to faint and die for want of *water*. In the same strain we have him speaking, *Psal. lxiii. 1. O God my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* And in *Psal. lxxxiv. 2. My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* So *Psal. cxix. 20.* This is language that can never be uttered, in truth, by any but saints indeed. And tho' *all* of them may not be able to express themselves in so warm a strain, and *few* of them at *all* times ; they are never so totally and habitually *cold*, and indifferent to the house of God, as *formalists* are, much less can they allow themselves so to be.

Where-

Wherefore,

3. 'Tis a desire that is *constant* and *abiding*, not taken up in a *fit* only, or for a *little while*; but it still lives in the soul in which 'tis kindled. This I have desired of the Lord, and I do so still; and, in token of it, resolve to *seek after*, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, as what I have no reason to be weary of, nor ever shall. I would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, in *this world*, and in the world where I am to live for ever. I desire still to be near to God, to live in his house to all eternity.

Lastly, 'Tis *influential upon practice*. The soul that desires to dwell in the house of the Lord, will express it in prayer to *him*; and follow it with his *own* endeavour. *One thing have I desired*, and that of the Lord. This is the request that I have offered up to him, *viz. That I might dwell in his House all the days of my life.*

Whoever go to him for corn and wine, and the admired things of the present world; since a change upon my soul, I could never think *these* of any importance, in comparison of his favour and presence, communion with him here, and the enjoyment of him at last; and, therefore, this is my heart's desire and prayer to him, that as long as I live, I may have the advantage of attending upon him in his ordinances *here*, and that upon my remove I may be admitted into his more glorious presence: that *here* and *above*, my dwelling may be in the house of God. And as his *desire* breathes forth in prayer to God; so 'tis attended with endeavours, *That will I seek after,*

I'll not think much of any labour that will bring me to the house of God ; I'll submit to any difficulties, so I may abide and dwell there : I would take all opportunities of waiting upon him ; omit no season of meeting with him ; I would be as often, as much as possible, in his company *now* ; and press on, with the utmost earnestness, towards *that state*, where there will be no fear of separation, or distance more. These are some of the properties of the saints desire, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

(2.) Let us briefly see from whence it springs. Why a child of God thus desires to dwell in his house ; both as to his *lower* house or *church here*, and the upper, better, one in heaven ?

In *general*, Wherever any such desire is found, 'tis owing to his *own spirit*. We did not bring it into the world with us, and we could not produce it ourselves. For ever since our primitive apostacy, 'tis a character that agrees to *all* in their *natural* state, *viz.* that they are *without God* in the world : they are so in point of *choice* ; this is the mournful account given us, after a solemn view God had taken of his lapsed creatures, *Psal.* xiv. 2. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. But they are all gone aside.* So far from desiring to dwell in his house, to enquire in his *temple*, that they say unto God, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy way,* Job xxi. 14. They had much rather be in the *world* than in the *church*, saying, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and*
1
the

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the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? Amos viii. 4.

Whence is it that the *cry* should be so vastly altered, and any of the degenerate race should vent themselves in language so very contrary to what they used before? To mention it as the *one* thing they desire, *viz.* that they may dwell in the house of God for ever? Whence such a change, but from the Spirit of God? 'Tis *one* of his *children* that thus desires to dwell in his house: And we are *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*, John i. 13. A change of temper by the *Spirit* of God, making us like him, is the ground of a real desire to dwell in his house. And the same spirit that lays a foundation for such a *desire*, also excites and maintains it, wherever 'tis found, and draws it forth in whatever degree of intenseness it works.

His *influence* is to go along with all the other things that are to be mentioned, as ministering to such a *desire*. And here,

1st, As to God's house on earth.

(1.) A child of God desires to dwell *there*, and seeks after it, as sway'd by his father's command, to which something within inclines him readily to yield. The will of God in his *word*, has a counter-part in the *heart*. He therefore says in general, *Speak Lord for thy servant heareth*; and as to seeking God, or attending upon him in his house, when he calls, *grace* teaches the soul, in which it dwells, readily to answer, *Thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord will I seek.* Psalm xxvii. 8.

2. The amiable conceptions they have of God, according to the representations he has given of himself, feed their desires to dwell in his house.

He is "the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and for his sake the "God of all grace;" and, as such, every renewed soul has a special *interest* in him, a special *relation* to him; and well may his children desire to dwell in the house of their *reconciled* heavenly father. As holy and just, had they to do with an *absolute* God, his terrors would make them afraid, and they could no more desire to dwell with him than to dwell with *devouring fire*. But there is, *now*, a high priest over the house of God, JESUS, whose blood sprinkled on the throne, has pacified justice, and sprinkled on their souls has taken away their guilt, and through *him* God would be conceived of, in his house, as sitting on a *throne of grace*, a mercy seat, ready and willing, in the most endearing manner, to converse with them; to speak kindly and comfortably to them. Now, being able to say *my God*, every one of his children may go on, and add with the Psalmist, *early will I seek thee*. I cannot be *too soon, too often, or too long*, with him: Is the living God the father of mercies; I desire to dwell in his house all the days of my life.

3. The delight and satisfaction the children of God have sometimes met with in his house, excite and feed their desires to dwell there.

O my soul, What sights have I seen in the house of God? what provisions have I tasted? what entertainments have I had? what enlargements in prayer, and answers thereto? what impression

pression under his word? what entertainment at his table, as he has sometimes brought me into his banquetting-house, and his banner over me has been love? And though I cannot, it may be, say so much of *this* as some *others*; yet what I have found, I cannot but remember with *thankfulness*; and desire more: and as this was in the *house* of God, *here* would I still desire to dwell.

Lastly, A sense of their continual need keeps up their desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all their days.

If I am in the *family*, how low is my state? how little my strength? Where should I dwell but in the house of God? Whither shall I go if I leave it? Here my strength may be repaired, my wants supplied, my doubts resolved, my diseases healed. There is *food* and *physick* in the house of the Lord; and as I shall have occasion and need of these as long as I live: this is the one thing I desire that I may live near to God.

2. As to his *upper* house in *heaven*. In this also they desire to dwell; and many things may be mentioned as giving birth, life, and strength to it. I shall mention three.

1st. The heavenly principle they are endued with. *Grace* comes from heaven; and as it disposes the soul for *glory*, in some measure it sets it a longing to be there.

2. The difference there is between their state *below* and that *above*. As to the *place*: This *earth* is but the viler part of the creation? how much inferior to *heaven*? As to the *inhabitants*: *here* are a mixture of all *sorts*; but, *above*, all will be of a sort, and all like God. As to their *circum-*

stances without : *Here*, they are subject to the rage of the world, the temptations of Satan, and a thousand snares, as the fruits of sin ; but *above* there will be nothing of this. As to their *condition* with respect to themselves : *Here* they are clog'd with corruption, imperfect as to grace ; but *above*, the one shall be done away, and the other compleat. As to their *work* : *Here* they have constant need to watch against what they fear, pray and cry for what they want, lament over what they feel : but *above*, all ground of complaint shall be removed, and prayer turned into *everlasting praise*.

3. The *foretaste* they sometimes have of what is to be enjoyed above. *We that have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves gourn within ourselves*. Having tasted of Canaan's grapes, they can't but long to see the good land. For if it be so desireable to behold the beauty of the Lord in his house below, what will it be to see *the King in his glory, and the Lord that is afar off*?

We come now to the

III^d Thing. The *aim* he professes to have herein, *viz. to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple*. Here I might consider,

1. The beauty he would behold.

2. The enquiries he would make.

1. The beauty he would behold. And here I shall show, .

(1.) Of what 'tis be understood ?

(2.) That the beholding *this* is what the saint aims at,

(3.) Why

(3.) Why is he so taken with it ?

(1.) What is this *beauty of the Lord* ?

God is, here, to be considered not absolutely, but as a *God in Christ* ; and thro' him the gracious display of his adorable perfections, which he is pleased to make to his people in his house, is the beauty here spoken of. This beauty of the Lord shines in his house below, but much more *above*.

In his house below. Much of the beauty of the Lord appears to his people, in his *acts* of grace towards them, and *work* of grace *in* them. By what he is now doing in his church under the ordinances of his gospel, they behold and admire his *indisputable sovereignty*, in taking here one and there another.

Again, *his almighty power*, which is eminently displayed in every sinner converted, and saint preserved.

His infinite wisdom, as contriving and carrying on the work of redemption ; which is what angels stoop down with eager desire and wonder to look into ; and holy souls, in the contemplation of it, are led to cry out, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* Rom. xi. 33.

His unspotted holiness, in regard to which he is oft described as the Holy One.

His *unshaken truth* and *faithfulness*, by which he infallibly performs all the promises he has spoken.

And to name but one more,

His astonishing goodness and mercy. This let me insist on a little.

The whole earth is full of his *goodness* ; and his tender mercies are over all his works. But the beauty of *these* is chiefly seen in his house. Here he gives the most astonishing discoveries of his kindness and grace ; in that *he has so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* His *goodness* is, here, displayed in renewing the natures of his people ; forgiving their sins, and sealing their pardon ; supplying their wants, and raising their hopes of the greatest happiness ; with the foretaste of which they are sometimes refreshed, while in their way to the full possession.

This is something of the *beauty* of the Lord to be seen in his house, his church below ; and *this* in all the ordinances and institutions of it.

But, (2.) Much more of the *beauty* of the Lord will be beheld *above*. But none can fully understand *this*, till admitted within the veil, 1 Cor. ii. 9. In the *upper-house* the face of God shall be unveiled, his beauty discovered, and the faculties of his people strengthened to bear it ; as clear discoveries shall be made, as a *glorified eye* and *mind* can take in, in order to its happiness.

Both these, then, are denoted by the *beauty of the Lord*, the discovery of his perfections *begun here*, to be *perfected above*.

Now, this is his *aim* in choosing a perpetual *abode* in the house of God. Whatever else there might be to tempt his eye, *this* he would make his main scope, *Psal.* xlii. 1, 2. *Psal.* lxiii. 1, 2. Nothing short of this can satisfy his desires ; and therefore he elsewhere adds, *My soul follow-*

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followeth hard after God. And *this*, in its measure, is the temper of every child of God; who desires to behold this *beauty of the Lord*,

(1.) As it is *transforming*.

We all, with open face, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 John iii. 2.

(2.) As *most pleasing*. What delight must it yield to behold the face of God reconciled? to receive the tokens of his love? to look in upon the soul, and behold his likeness? to be admitted to communion with him; and all this as preparatory to the full fruition? But,

3. Another end the gracious soul aims at, in desiring to dwell in the house of the Lord, is, *to enquire in his temple*.

This may refer to his *preceptive* or *disposing* will.

1st, As to his *preceptive will*. This the gracious soul is solicitous to learn, and would learn of him. No teacher like God for *clearness*, for *power*, for *success*; and therefore he desires to dwell in his house, to be taught of him, to learn of him, *Acts ix. 6. Psal. cxix. 19. 1 Sam. iii. 10.* 'Tis by light *from thee*, I am to be directed *to thee*. O give me strength to obey, and then require what thou wilt.

2. His *disposing will*. Several enquiries the gracious soul would make in his temple here, and about which *he* only can satisfy; As,

Why the wicked are so often great in the world, and believers in the worst condition? Why
these

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these are tried by the buffetings of Satan? Why deprived of the light of God's countenance? Why the state of the best is imperfect while they live here? Why they must go hence by dying? How all the *promises* are fulfilled in *providence*? And what they have thought to be against them, does nevertheless work for their everlasting good?

APPLICATION.

(1.) How astonishing is it, that God should have a temple with men!

(2.) How kind was the undertaking of Christ to open a way to this?

(3.) How much to be lamented is it, that so few should desire to dwell in his house? That it is so, is too evident, and it ought to be matter of lamentation.

(4.) How great and raised a change is there, when this is desired above all things?

(5.) How seriously should we examine ourselves as to this? Enquire how it is with you. Is this the one thing that you desire, and are you resolved to seek after it? Do the words of the text express the prevailing temper of your minds; so that you can truly say, *One thing have we desired of the Lord, &c.* If this expresses the stated workings of our minds with respect to God, and communion with him, here, and in heaven; his sanctifying spirit has been at work upon us, and we might say with the *Psalmist*, Psal. xxiii. 6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the rest of my days; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

S E R M.

S E R M O N VI.

The Believer's Hope in God, and waiting for his Salvation.

L A M. III. 24, 25, 26.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

THE prophet, in the midst of a solemn lamentation, here points to the ground of his support ; and bears his testimony for God as to his goodness in dealing with his people *now*, and the salvation he designs for them *hereafter*.

In the words taken together, we have,

1. The prophet's solemn claim of a special interest in God. *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.*

Whatever

Whatever others run to, or expect relief from, believers have recourse to God, the great and glorious JEHOVAH, as their portion. *The Lord is my portion*, my lot and heritage, my happiness and rest; that which I desire, and chuse, love and live upon, am pleased with, and would for ever enjoy, as men do their *portion*. "There be many that say, who will shew us *any good*," but *any good* will not serve my turn: That which respects only the *body*, or outward man, I can't take up with: In opposition to *this*, the Lord is my portion. I have not only good from him, but *himself* who is before, and infinitely better than all, to be mine.

The Lord is my portion. How mean and afflicted soever I am, be my case what it will, upon *earth*, I can look with comfort to *heaven*. How many soever have an interest in him, he is sufficient for all; as much to me as if there were none else. *The Lord is my portion*, one that I have chosen to be so, and would never change; and what my tongue utters, as to this, is the sense of my heart; *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul*.

2. His resolution hereupon: *Therefore will I hope in him*: Expect from him whatever he hath promised, and the state of my case calls for: support under trouble, and deliverance out of it in his own time and way: supply of my wants, release from my fears, taking off my burdens, answering of my prayers: in a word, whatever is included in, and may be inferred from the character in which he is willing to be known to his people, namely, as *their portion*.

3. The

3. The companions of this hope, *viz. waiting and seeking*, with the encouragement to both, namely, the *goodness* of God, in himself, and to his people, who are thus found in the way of their duty. *The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

4. The advantage of hoping and waiting for God's salvation. This will redound to God's glory, and our own comfort and joy: and how long soever we are put to wait, the *salvation* waited for will come at last, and has enough in it to make amends for all. *It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

Suitable to these we may observe:

I. God is the *portion* of every one of his people.

II. The soul, that has the Lord for his portion, has abundant encouragement to *hope in him.*

III. *Prayer* and *patience*, are to be the companions of hope in the people of God, to both which they have a powerful motive in his *goodness.*

IV. No servant of God shall be a loser by *him*; but every one of them be led to own at last, that it is good to hope, and quietly wait, for his salvation.

I. *God is the portion of every one of his people.*

Under *this*, three things deserve to be considered, *viz.*

1. What may be said of God as the portion of his people?

2. That

2. That every one of *these* has a special interest in him as *his*.

3. How he comes to be so?

1. What may be said of God as the *portion of his people?*

He is (1.) a most *suitable* portion to them.

(2.) An *all-sufficient* portion. Thus he speaks of himself to *Abraham*, *I am God Almighty*, or all-sufficient. He wants nothing to his own happiness; and as to his people, is said to be able to do for them exceeding abundantly, above what they can ask or think, *Eph. iii. 20.*

(3.) An infinite Portion.

(4.) As the portion of his people, He is most safe and secure to them.

(5.) He is an *eternal, durable* portion: And,

(6.) *Lastly*, As the result of all this, he is a *satisfying* portion: What we can never be weary of, or desire to change. *But these particulars are but just mentioned here, as being spoken to a little in a foregoing Sermon.*

2. Every one of God's people has a special interest in him as *his*.

The prophet may be here considered as claiming this for *himself*; or speaking in the name of the church, and every sincere member of it: *The Lord is my portion.* David uses the same language, *Psalms xvi. 5. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.* In which he alludes both to the distribution of the land of *Canaan* among the *Israelites* (where every one had his part or portion, assigned him for his inheritance) and to the custom at feasts of setting every one's allowance of meat by his cup, here called the

the *portion of his cup*, only with this difference ; in both these things there is a *partition*, or *dividing*, no one *Israelite* had all the land of *Canaan*, nor could one person be said to have all the feast : The portions assigned to several, made it the less to every one : But every saint has God for his portion, who cannot be divided ; and so he has God, and all that he is, and hath, and can do. This is the privilege of every one of his people, which therefore the Psalmist comforts himself with, when every thing else was dropping from him, *Psal. lxxiii. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is my portion for ever.* And he repeats it to God himself, *Psal. cxix. 57. Thou art my portion, O Lord.* The Lord's portion is his people ; and his people's portion is their God. But this leads to a

3d thing, *viz.* How he comes to be so ? There is a mutual claim, and 'tis brought about by something on each side ; on God's part and on theirs.

On God's part, 'tis owing,

1. To his own love resolving to raise them to the highest happiness. This he has done from all eternity. *Psal. ciii. 17. Eph. i. 3, 4. Love* had kind thoughts towards them before they had a being : And, tho' 'twas foreseen how unworthy they would make themselves, by sin, 'tis the nature of *Love* to be bountiful, and give to the undeserving. God loves his people ; and because he loves them, for the eternal honour of that love of his, he will bestow upon them the chiefest good, the best portion. As 'tis said of his confirming the promise to *Abraham*, *Heb. vi. 13.* Because he could swear by no greater, he
sware

sware by himself : So *here*, having nothing greater to bestow, he himself will be his people's portion. This is the result of his own eternal love.

2. To make way for *this*, his son is given to die for them.

Whatever purpose God had taken up of making his people happy in himself, they being fallen into sin, the separation is so wide, that he insists upon *satisfaction*, before he vouchsafes to draw near to us. We had forfeited all favour at his hand ; much more the happiness of having a special interest in him : We had deserved his *wrath*, and were liable to *it* as our portion ; and moreover as defiled by sin, were loathsome to him, and unfit for communion with him. Now, to remove such difficulties as these, which we could never do ourselves, he chose his own son to be a mediator between himself and us ; and in the fulness of time he sent him into the world, to die a propitiation for sin, to satisfy justice, to redeem from deserved wrath, and thereby to procure the gift of the holy spirit, in order to our being prepared, and disposed to draw nigh to God.

This is another step, in order to God's becoming a portion to such as were by nature children of wrath. And the thing is every way wonderful and amazing, that God himself should be the portion of creatures, that had gone into rebellion against him ; and that to make way for *this*, he should give up his own son to the bitterest sufferings, to bear the punishment of their
sins,

ins, that they might not come short of having the Most High for their portion!

3. God expressly makes over himself in the covenant of grace to be theirs, saying, *I am God all-sufficient, and your God*: And to every individual believer, *I am, and will be thine*: One whom thou hast an interest in, and may'st call thy own. *I am God, and thy God; thy portion and exceeding great reward.*

On his people's part, They accept of him as such; having their *minds* enlightened by his spirit to discern what a portion God is, how much preferable to all others, and their *wills* sweetly bowed to chuse and close with him, in some such language as *this*: *Let others cry, amidst vanity and vexation, Who will shew us any good? O Lord, I betake myself to thee, to thee alone: No creature-comfort or creature-enjoyment, can supply thy place, or be to me in thy stead: I have tried what this world can do too often; I have followed it too long: But now, as drawn by thy powerful grace, my desire works towards thee, my heart I place upon thee: Seeing through thy son thou offerest to be mine, with adoring thankfulness I accept of thee, and in return resign myself unto thee, and call heaven and earth to witness that I would never change, never go back.* Thus by mutual consent and choice, God becomes the portion of his people, of every one of them.

II. *The soul that has the Lord for his portion, has abundant encouragement to hope in him.* Considering what a portion God is, I need add nothing more to prove, that he is the proper object

of his people's *hope*: But only shew when to make use of him as such. As,

I. Under an affecting sense of the church's sufferings.

He that has chosen the *Lord* for his God, has chosen the people of God for his people, and from love to both can't but be grieved for the afflictions of *Joseph*. But having the Lord for his portion, he has, therein, a supporting ground of hope, that his cause and interest shall revive, and serious religion spread and flourish. And how full soever the world at present is of *atheism* and *infidelity*, contempt of God, and rage against those that are devoted to him; truth and righteousness, the knowledge, love and fear of God, shall yet prevail and triumph over all this. *The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him*: He that sent to invite *me* to him, made *me* sensible of my need of him, brought *me* to chuse, accept and close with him, can easily do the same for *others*. God has set a saving design on foot, for the bringing of many sons unto glory; and how slow soever it seems to proceed, it shall take place as to every one that the Most High delighteth to honour. I was once afar off, as liable and likely to perish as any; but *now the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, and what reason have I to hope in him*, that he will, in his own time and way, carry on his work upon the hearts of *others*, and enlarge his kingdom and interest in the world.

There is a *general assembly, and church of the first-born*, that shall meet in heaven; a *day*, in which the Redeemer shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that be-

lieve ; and in order hereto, *multitudes* shall hear the joyful sound, and submit to it, and throwing away their idols, return unto the living God.

The Lord is my portion, in company with all that are effectually called ; and notwithstanding the obscurity they are under at present, by reason of the sufferings to which they are exposed, all this shall have a glorious issue, and end well.

The Lord is my portion, and will prove himself such to *all his* ; therefore will I hope in him : hope that *tho' it be the day of Jacob's trouble, he shall be saved out of it*, Jer. xxx. 7.

2. When low and despised in the world, exercised with pressing necessities and straits, the soul that can say, *The Lord is my portion*, may take encouragement to hope in him.

The Lord is my portion, on whose word of blessing I live more than on bread ; and who hath moreover promised, that *tho' the young lions lack and suffer hunger, they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing*. Wherefore *altho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation*, Habak. iii. 17, 18.

3. When walking in darkness, and seeing no light, the soul that can say, *The Lord is my portion*, has encouragement still to hope in him.

Tho' God hides his face from his people, he does not dissolve or disown the mutual relation : He ceases not to love them, tho' he forbears for a while to manifest his love to them, *Isa. liv. 7, 8, 10. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee : In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ;*

but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

Tho' it is not with me, in respect of light and comfort, as heretofore, *the Lord is my portion*, and will never change; and hence this darkness will be over, and the clouds vanish. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, why art thou disquieted within me; hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.*

4. When buffeted by Satan, the soul that has the *Lord for his portion*, has reason also to hope in him.

God will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13. I shall not always continue under a necessity of wrestling against principalities and powers, but have at length a complete victory, and get out of Satan's reach for ever.

5. The people of God are not exempted from afflictions: But when *these* are their lot, their interest in God is sufficient for their support. *The Lord, who is my portion*, has the ordering of all that I meet with; and will suffer nothing to befall me, but what is consistent with that relation, and subservient to the wise and kind designs he has to carry on. And tho' *no affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, nevertheless it shall afterward yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby.*

The

The Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, much less his own, without reasons worthy of himself. He sees my need of the darkeſt diſpenſation I have ever met with ; and whiſt I have light enough to diſcern that he is my portion ; on this ground would I hope in him, to bring light out of the thickeſt darkneſs, and by temporal ſufferings promote my ſpiritual and eternal ſalvation ; and give me full ſatisfaction, in the next world, how all conduced to it, that he appointed to me in this.

Laſtly, The righteous muſt die as well as others : But under the apprehenſions of this, the intereſt he hath in God, is a ſolid ground of hope.

The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him ; hope that he who guideth me by his counſel, even unto death, will be with me dying, and when my fleſh and my heart fail, be the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever. I had never look'd higher than the preſent world for a happineſs, had I not been taught of God : I had never inquired after *him*, or made choice of *him*, if he had not enabled me to do ſo ; and I can't give way to deſponding fears, that he will, after all, reject and caſt me off. No, no, *the Lord is my portion ;* therefore will I hope, that the ſoul that is returning *to him*, ſhall be received to perfect bleſſedneſs *with him*, and that the body ſhall not be forgotten, tho' diſmiſſed, and for a time laid up in the grave. *The Lord is my portion ;* and as ſuch, will ſhew me the path of life, even *that* which leads to his preſence, *where there is fulneſs of joy,* and where *there are pleaſures for evermore.*

III. *Prayer and patience are to be the companions of hope in the people of God; to both which they have a powerful argument in his goodness.* "The Lord is good to them that wait him; to the soul that seeketh him."

Under this I might shew,

1. The people of God are a generation that seek him.

They seek his *face*, and *favour*, as their *life*; his *kingdom*, as their *home*; his *righteousness*, as that by which they are to be *intitled* to it; his *grace*, as their *meetness* for it; his *spirit*, as their *guide*, by whose power they are to be kept thro' faith unto salvation; And thus they go *praying*, and *seeking*, upward, to the world of praise and rest.

2. Every one that seeks God aright, has his soul engaged in the work. Concerning this *David* appeals to himself, *Psalms* xxvii. 8. *When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek.*

3. They whose souls are engaged in seeking God, will and ought to wait for him. To wait and look up; to wait and hold on; to wait, and refer themselves to God's choice, when the desires of their souls shall be answered; to wait and put a good construction on God's seeming delays. In order to *this*, the *command* and *promise* are engraven within. *Psalms* xxvii. 14. *Wait on the Lord: Be of good courage; and he shall strengthen thine heart.*

4. The *goodness* of God is a powerful argument to engage his people to seek to him, and wait for him. So it is, as 'tis *infinite*; as through his

his son, 'tis *open*, and ready to be communicated to those who otherwise could have no hope ; as it is what his people have experienced, and given their testimony to. The goodness of God, under such views, may well be his people's support, in seeking to him, waiting for him, as he never said unto the seed of *Jacob*, *Seek ye me in vain*.

There is yet a

IVth Observation. *No servant of God shall be a loser by him ; but every one of them be led to own at last, that it is good to hope, and quietly wait for his salvation.*

To evidence this, I need only consider,

1. What is included in the salvation waited for ?

2. The engaging title given to it, *The salvation of the Lord*.

3. What is implied in *hoping* ?

4. In what respect it is good to hope, and quietly wait for *this* ?

1. What is included in the salvation waited for ? In general, it includes the whole of that blessedness that Christ hath purchased, and which God for his sake hath promised. 'Tis,

1. A salvation from every kind and degree of evil ; sin, temptation, the troubles of this world, and *future everlasting miseries*, Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

Now, how desireable must be a *salvation* that includes a freedom from all *these*.

2. 'Tis a being put into a possession of all good ; for which 'tis called *salvation with eternal glory* (2 Tim. ii. 10.) An *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, reserved, where eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor

bath it entered into the heart to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him.----Where every desire shall be filled up, every prayer answered, and all turned into the most raised everlasting thanksgiving and praise.

The salvation laid up for the people of God, is worth waiting for, considering what is included in it.

2. Consider it under its engaging title, *the salvation of the Lord.*

This can denote no less than,

(1). 'Tis a salvation worthy of him, *Heb. xi. 16. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.*

(2.) 'Tis designed, prepared, and promised by him.

'Tis God that, resolved to bring many sons out of our world to such a salvation as this; conquered all difficulties in the way; appointed his Son the captain of it; promised it first to him, and for his sake, to all that come unto God by him.

(3.) 'Tis a salvation that will consist in the enjoyment of God; dwelling in his presence under the light of his countenance, the freest communications of his love and goodness, filling the soul with that fulness of joy, which nothing short of possession can acquaint us with. Who can comprehend the blessedness carried in those words, *Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ?*

Well

Well may it be said, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be*, but what we are waiting for is *the salvation of God*.

3. What is implied in *hoping*, and patiently waiting for it?

1. Having the heart fixt by faith on the salvation of God as *real*, tho' *out of sight*.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. By *this* the people of God wait for his salvation, not as a mere probability, but as the greatest certainty. Eternal life is what God, who cannot lie, has promised.

2. A firm persuasion, that the salvation of God will come at last, tho' for a time deferred.

Tho' I am in one world, and the happiness I expect in another; *hope* enters into that within the veil, and so proves an anchor to the soul both sure and stedfast, enabling the heirs of heaven to hold out till they reach the kingdom they are tending to. He that has wrought them for the self-same thing, is God; and having made them meet for heaven, he will not always keep them at so mournful a distance. How great soever be the salvation I am waiting for; the price of it is paid; my Lord and head is in possession; the royal word is past; and *all the promises are yea and amen in Christ*; and thro' whatever difficulties the heirs of heaven are to pass, they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.

3. Expecting God's salvation in his time; depending upon his *wisdom* to chuse the fittest season,

son, and his *faithfulness* to remember us when that season comes.

Tho' the salvation be great, I am waiting for, and the evils many I am here liable to, I would not make a sinful haste. The husbandman waiteth, and hath long patience for the early and latter rain to ripen the fruits of the earth; and why should not I wait for a much better harvest?

4. Serious care to be found ready whenever called to enter upon the salvation of God we have been waiting for.

This is the temper here recommended.

5. In what respects may it be said to be good, thus to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God?

1. 'Tis good, as it redounds to God's glory; as 'tis a testimony to his power and grace, as what bears us up during our stay in this world, and fully provides for our complete blessedness.

2. As it may encourage others to put in for a share in the salvation of God; by the hope of which we are born up amidst the difficulties of the present state, and enabled patiently to wait for *the salvation of God* in a better.

3. As it will be comfortable to ourselves, disposing us to meet the will of God, in a becoming manner: When our heavenly father shall call, saying, "Come up hither," to be ready to step forth, and answer, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord. Blessed is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing."

APPLICATION.

1. Does every one of God's people say from his soul, *the Lord is my portion*, hence learn that *real religion is an inward thing*; and the power of it lies in what passes between heaven and the heart, in transactions that only God and the soul can be witnesses to.

2. Does every one that comes into the number of the people of God say from his soul, *The Lord is my Portion*, Of what importance is it to enquire what is the language, the sense, of my soul? Do I join with the multitude in saying, who will shew us any good? or renouncing all this world, look to God as infinitely better, saying, This is my rest for ever, by this will I abide, for I have chosen it.

3. How great and amiable is the change that grace hath made on every saint, in leading him to take up the language of the text as his own, *The Lord is my portion*; and thereupon to hope, and quietly wait, for his *salvation*.

4. If you have chosen God for your portion, living and dying, hope in him as such. Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises: And may their God be yours, and so your guide to the death, and then receive you to glory, in which you may dwell *with him*, and one another for ever.

The Lord is my portion, therefore would I hope in him, and go to him as such, taking my eternal farewell of this world, as one that is removing from a foreign country, and going home
to

to God, to see the salvation I have been waiting for.

'Tis indeed a great trial to have soul and body parted, the body to be lodged in the grave, and the soul to remove to a world that I never saw. But as God is my portion, I trust and rely upon him to receive my departing spirit, and watch over my sleeping dust, and at last raise it again in a far better state, that it may be fit for the perfected soul to inhabit in that world where the compleat happiness of his people is reserved.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. But how may it be known when this is said in truth?

(1.) Where any say in truth, *The Lord is my portion*, they have been so far sensible of his worth, and their own need of him, as to be incapable of being satisfied without him, or taking up with any thing else?

(2.) The soul that has said, *The Lord is his portion*, has entered into covenant with him.

Indeed this is the saying by which he becomes the portion of any : By our accepting him as offered, and yielding to his demand, and this in a manner suitable to the solemn transaction. *Ezek. xvi. 8. I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.* And at the same time, by his free donation, he becomes the portion of his people, allowing their claim to him as theirs.

The soul that has seen the vanity of the world, and the happiness offered him in God, is thereupon led to say, O Lord, as drawn by thy grace, my desires work towards thee, my heart I place upon thee, I believe, I feel that thou only canst

be my portion and rest ; and as in thy son thou offerest to be so, with adoring thankfulness I close with that offer, chuse thee to be mine, and yield myself to thee as thine, with a resolution never to change, never go back.

3. Where the soul says, *The Lord is my portion*, it loves him, above all, or with a superlative affection.

Tho' alas (cries such a one) I love thee not as I would, yet looking upon thee as my portion, I desire to love thee : I love to love thee : And seek no greater happiness than perfect endless mutual love. I hate myself for loving thee no more, accounting no want, deformity, shame, or pain, so great or grievous a calamity as want of love to God, that I see so much reason for, and have so many motives and obligations to.

4. The soul that saith, *The Lord is my portion*, values communion with him more than any sensible enjoyment, and restlessly labours after it, where it is wont to be vouchsafed : Thinks with pleasure of the place and seasons where any thing of this was experienced, and cannot but be concerned, when deprived of such advantages, and long to be restored.

5. The soul that saith, *The Lord is my portion*, can't but delight and rejoice, so far as apprehended to be so, and is greatly thankful for the direction and grace that inclined and enabled him to make the happy choice which he would not now exchange for all the world, saying, *the lines are pleasantly fallen to me, yea I have a goodly heritage.*

One beam of God's love and favour let in upon the soul, revives it more than any or all other temporal comforts could do.

6. The soul that saith, *The Lord is my portion*, feels the greatest grief for the apprehended loss of him, or when in the dark as to an interest in him.

7. The soul that saith, *The Lord is my portion*, will, by prayer and supplication, frequently go to him, and be more earnest for his favour and grace than for any lower good.

8. The soul that saith, *The Lord is his portion*, will make him the ground of his trust and triumph, when outward comforts may be withdrawn or denied. *Habakkuk* iii. 17, 18.

9. Where the soul saith, *The Lord is my portion*, there will be a care to please and serve him with the inward man, and a fear to offend him, even in the thoughts, or things that do not come under the eye of the world.

Lastly, the soul that says, *The Lord is my portion*, is, breathing after that world and state where it shall have the full enjoyment of him; and frequently, with pleasure, taken up in the believing thoughts and hopes of it; As its chief felicity will then begin, when this world is to be for ever left, and all lower sensual delights at an end. However men of the world are pleased with their portion in the present life, the soul that says, *The Lord is my portion*, thus vents its longing desire after him as such, *Psalms* xvii. 15. *As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*

But

But before I break off, I would apply myself to such as are yet strangers to God, or have no interest in him as theirs. 'Tis sad there should be any such ; but of how many is there reason to fear it ? Now, my exhortation to such is, as you value your souls see to it, that God be yours. In order to this,

1. Apprehend your misery and danger without him : your misery, in this world, as nothing can suit or satisfy the soul without God ; your danger, as going to appear before that God you have no interest in, and so no ground to hope for acceptance with him. At all times, you are liable to be call'd away by death, and then your state is fix'd for ever.

2. Be assured God is yet willing to be yours. How long soever you have stood out against him ; how light soever you have made of him ; he is ready to pass by all, and be your God still, being in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Therefore, as melted by his grace say, " O Lord forgive
" that I have been so long a stranger to thee :
" I blush to think that I have so long preferred
" other things before thee : I am convinced of
" my folly, and now make a wiser choice. O
" receive me graciously, love me freely, so shall
" I have reason to bless thee to all eternity."

And thus passing into the number of the people of God, my next work is to speak to you as such, which I will do very briefly in two or three words only.

1. Heartily

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1. Heartily bless God in a sense of what he has done for you.

2. Continue in the use of all ordinances.

3. Pity, and pray for such as live without God, without Christ, and without hope, in the world, as all unconverted sinners do.

S E R-

S E R M O N VII.

GOD's people regarded as his Jewels.

M A L A C H I III. 17.

They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.

IN the foregoing verse we have the character, and good conversation, of the people of God in an evil day. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.* Of this God's approbation is recorded. *And the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him.*

The text is God's gracious promise concerning them: *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.*

In which several things deserve our notice.

1. The notion under which God views, and speaks of his people as *his jewels*.

2. A figurative description of the happiness designed for them, suitable to that notion. As his jewels he will *make them up*.

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3. A set time appointed for this, spoken of with an emphasis, *that day*.

4. The regard then promised to them, *they shall be mine*.

5. The security of all : 'Tis the promise of one who has power sufficient to make good his word : *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*.

Answerable to these, our work will be to shew,

I. That the people of God, such as fear him, are *his jewels*.

II. What is implied in his *making them up* ?

III. That there is a day coming, wherein this shall be done.

IV. How they shall be owned in *that day*.

V. The character under which God is represented, declaring this, *viz.* as *the Lord of hosts*, which notes the certainty of performance, and the ground of his people's hope and comfort. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels*.

1. *God's people are here spoken of as his jewels*. The persons referred to are the same that are mentioned in the foregoing verse : *They that fear the Lord*.

The *fear of God* is often put for *all religion*. They that *fear* him are such as have not only the *form*, but the *power* of godliness : Upon whom those words have been made good, as the sum of the covenant God makes with his people, *Jer. xxxii. 40*. " *I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me*. The *fear of God* dwells and rules in their souls ; forms their tempers, and influences their course. They

fear God, and keep up high, honourable, thoughts of him ; flee from sin as displeasing to him ; which from knowledge and experience of his goodness they can't but dread above all things else in the world. By this they watch against the risings of corruption within, and are enabled to resist temptation without ; saying, *I dare not do this wickedness, for I fear God* : I fear to wrong him who has deserved so well of me ; I fear to lose my interest in him, who has been so gracious to me, and in whose favour my life is bound up. They *fear God*, and make conscience of keeping his commandments ; regard his eye, and endeavour to approve themselves to it ; and this at all times, especially in attending his worship and ordinances, *Psalms lxxxix. 7.* They fear, and look diligently, lest they should fail of the grace of God *now*, or his glory *at last*, and come short of heaven, after they have stood fair for it. They fear, and apply to Christ, in whom only they can be delivered from the wrath to come, and accepted of God as to their persons and services. These are the *persons* of whom God here speaks as *his jewels* : And they may be thus stiled.

(1.) As *rare, and comparatively few*. Jewels are more seldom seen than common stones. *Moses* tells *Israel*, *Ye were the fewest of all people.* *Deut. vii. 7.* God's spiritual *Israel* are so ; one of a city, two of a tribe : For thinness, as in the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches.

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'Tis a *remnant* that are said to be saved, *Isa.* xvii. 6. And Christ calls them a *little flock*, *Luke* xii. 32.

How few find, or chuse, the strait gate, and narrow way, that lead to life? while the wide gate has many that go in thereat, and the broad way that leads to destruction is crowded. *Matth.* vii. 13, 14. Of a whole world only *Noah* and his family, are saved; the rest swept away by the flood are stiled *ungodly*, *2 Pet.* ii. 5. And even among the eight spared there is a *wicked Ham*. Not ten righteous are to be found in *Sodom*, how populous soever; and since Christ's coming, *we*, saith the Apostle, *are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* *1 John* v. 29.

How small a part of the habitable world is enlightened by the gospel? And among professing Christians, were the *unsound* separated from the *sincere*, Christ's flock would appear to be little indeed; and in comparison of the multitudes of others, we may speak of every one of them with a note of wonder, as Christ of *Nathaniel*, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* *John* i. 47. The people of God are *jewels* as *rare*. And,

(2.) They may be said to be so, on account of *their excellency*. Jewels are precious, and saints are called, *the excellent of the earth*, *Psalms* xvi. 3. So they are as adorned with grace, and heirs of glory. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, *Prov.* xii. 26. He has already *that* which cost the Redeemer his blood communicated to him, and *this* as an earnest of all the happiness

happinefs of heaven, purchafed by the fame blood, and referved for him.

(3.) The people of God may be ftiled his *jewels*, by reason of *the place they have in his value and efteem*. Men prize their jewels, fo does God ✓ his *saints*.

He has a fingular value for them, and has declared it.

(1.) In the price he gave to redeem them to himfelf; when by fin they were loft, and liable to perifh for ever. 1 *Pet.* i. 18.

(2.) By his renewing them, creating them after his own image, turning them from darknefs to light, and fo from the power of Satan to himfelf.

(3.) God's value for his faints will for ever appear in the kingdom and glory to which he will bring them; where as *jewels*, they fhall be always under his eye, and dwell in his prefence to all eternity.

(4.) The title of *jewels* God gives his people denotes his *care of them*. Men are careful to keep their *jewels*, fo is God to preferve his *saints*. He values them, and is more concerned for them than for all the world befide. *Jer.* xxx. 10, 11. *Ifai.* xliiii. 4. *Thou wast precious in my fight, therefore will I give men for thee, &c.*

5. The people of God are his *jewels*, as he efteems himfelf *honoured by them*, and greatly delights in them.

Men count their jewels their *honour*, as well as *treafure*. Thus God is pleafed with his faints, as perfons that are, and will be, an honour to him: And *this* as the workmanfhip of his grace,

the instruments of his glory, or a people formed for his praise. He who knows their worth, and the purposes for which they are formed, expressly calls *Israel, my glory*, *Isai. xlv. 13.*

Upon such grounds as these, the people of God may be spoken of as *jewels*. And it may deserve regard, in how endearing a manner he declares them *his*; *my jewels*.

1. As he is the *efficient*, or maker, of them; and this not only as men but saints: They have no value or excellency, light or lustre, but what they receive from him, and hold in a dependance upon him. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, but 'tis God that makes him to differ.

2. As he is the *owner* and *disposer* of them. Wherever any holy soul is found as a jewel, its nature and mark denote it to belong to God: And as he is the rightful *owner* of all such, so he is the *disposer* of them; takes himself to be peculiarly interested in them; and will not suffer the proudest mortal to do with them, or to them, what he pleases. He orders, and over-rules, all that concerns them in this world; what part or place every jewel shall adorn; how long it shall shine; and when, and in what manner, it shall be removed by death, and added to the brighter ones above.

3. They are *his*, as set apart for himself. *Psal. iv. 3.*

They are made *jewels* by his power and grace, and the design of all is his own glory: To serve and honour him upon earth, and then to be eminently honoured by him, in being taken to heaven;

heaven; where also they shall be to his praise and glory for ever.

4. God calls them, *my jewels*, to tell us what they are to him, from whom else soever their worth may be hid. God seeth not as man seeth, and knows the thoughts that he thinks towards them, to be thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an expected end.---But,

II. What is implied in his *making them up*?

This may be considered with reference either to their being at present dispersed and mixed with others, or imperfect as to themselves.

1. It may refer to their being, at present, dispersed and mixed with sinners; as jewels with lumber or rubbish; and so God's making them up, implies his taking them out from the company of all others, and his collecting them all into one body, under Christ their Lord and head.

(1.) His *taking them out* from the company of all others. The tares and wheat grow together; sheep and goats, jewels and common stones, or viler earth, are mixt. Saints and sinners, christians and hypocrites, they that fear God, and such as fear him not, dwell one among another, and travel together through the present world. But it shall not be always thus: *The Lord knoweth them that are his*; who belong to him, and who do not; and will at last make an exact and total separation between them. No counterfeit professor shall pass for a jewel, how well soever polished, and set off; nor the least *jewel*, that is real, be forgotten or overlooked.

(2.) God will collect all his people into one body, under Christ their common Lord and head. Of this he speaks, *Matt. xxiv. 31. And he shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven unto the other.* In this congregation of the righteous no ungodly sinner shall be admitted to stand, nor any one given to Christ, to be preserved to glory, be wanting. They are now at a distance from one another; some in heaven, others in earth: But when or wherever they have, or shall live from the beginning to the end of time, they shall be at last brought together; and *this*,

1. For the Redeemer's greater triumph, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

2. That as an evidence of his faithfulness, they may be delivered in full number to the father; And,

3. That with the greater joy all the children of the kingdom may enter upon it together.

Thus God will *make up his jewels*, by taking them from among the rest of the world, and uniting them into one body.

2. With respect to their being *imperfect*, so God's *making them up*, implies his *finishing* what concerns either soul or body, and making them compleatly happy, as to both, to all eternity.

And here two things are to be considered, namely, the imperfections of the present state, from which God will set his people free, and what moreover he will bestow upon them,

(1.) God, in making up his jewels, will free them from all the imperfections of the present state.

How many and great these are, as to soul and body, saints are too well acquainted with, to need the labour of proving. They know by feeling, and own it in their complaints, that they have not yet attained, are not yet perfect. *Phil.* iii. 12.

As to the *body*, how often does it prove a clog to the *soul*; soon tiring and growing weary, even in the service of God, and by its frequent disorders rendering what we do for him very lame and defective? As pieces of breathing clay, how frail are they at best? To what troops of diseases liable and often invaded with, unfitting us almost for any thing but to sigh and groan, and languish out our time in expectation of a dissolution, which all this tends to? No words can express what some undergo in a pain'd distemper'd body, by which their lives are a continual burden, which all the patience they can get, is little enough to bear.

And, as to the *soul*, how much greater, and more grievous, are the imperfections which *here* saints themselves labour under, and can't but be affected with? Upon man's apostacy from God, sin obscured the brightness, spoiled the beauty, and sadly disordered all the faculties of the soul. The *mind* is filled with darkness, as to God and the things of God; the *will* rebellious; the *affections* carnal, and inordinately placed on the enjoyments of sense, and time, as their chief felicity. This is the condition of all by nature.
And

And tho' *grace*, in the children of God, has made them so far to differ from others, as *jewels* from the *viler earth*, yet even in these *jewels*, how many flaws remain?

Tho' they are sanctified in every part, yet not perfectly in any: No; they have much ignorance with their knowledge; backwardness to what is good, with their delight in it; *a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin*. Upon which the holiest of them find reason for that complaint, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Well, God will make up his jewels, by freeing them from all *this*. As to their *bodies*, they shall be above all wants and weakneses; pains and diseases; death, and the numberless fore-runners of it, that here they are almost continually disquieted by. *For there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain*. Rev. xxi. 4. All these things shall be done away, and all complaints upon the account of them.

And with respect to the *soul*; indwelling corruption shall be quite rooted out, and so all the disorders springing from it known no more. There shall be no *speck* upon the *inward man*, nor any thing amiss in the *outward*; but *soul* and *body* delivered from all the evils and imperfections of the present state.

2. God will moreover bestow upon them whatever is necessary to compleat their happiness, as to both, to all eternity.

Grace,

Grace, here begun, shall be perfected in the *soul*; and the *body* formed to a suitableness to bear it company in the glorious state *both* are designed for. 'Tis much for a *saint* to be freed from all that lay so heavy upon him, or was matter of complaint to him, whilst in this present world; to be no more sick or pain'd as to the outward man, or disturbed by the workings of corruption within. 'Tis pleasant to think of a time when we shall have no more sin or sorrow; no weaknesses or infirmities, darkness or disorders; no aching head, or untoward heart, or misplaced irregular affections; no such uncomfortable distance from God, unlikeness to him, or weariness and indifference in waiting upon him.

O happy time, when *soul* and *body* shall be disengaged, and delivered, from the many and grievous burdens of the present state! But this is not all: When God makes up his jewels, he will not put them off with a *negative happiness*. The *soul* shall have the highest accomplishment of all its faculties; and the *body* be endowed with the most excellent qualities; and *both* advanced to the most glorious state to go out no more.

III. *There is a day coming, wherein God will thus make up his jewels.*

'Tis spoken of as a day God had his eye upon, to which the work of making up his jewels is assigned, and wherein it shall be accomplished. And it may refer either to the day of the saint's dissolution, or the day of the general resurrection; in both which God will make up his jewels.

(1.) The day of the *saints-dissolution*.

In this God frees the soul from all the imperfections of its present state, and compleats its meetness for a better. The *body of death* is put off with the *body of flesh*, and the spirits of the just made perfect in holiness, *enter into the joy of their Lord*.

What good news must this be to the serious christian, that has been long groaning under the remains of corruption, and *desirous to be dissolved, to be with Christ*, as that which is far better? At *death*, that desire shall be satisfied, and all lamentation turned into songs of thanksgiving.

2. The day of the *general resurrection*, is that in which, in the most eminent manner, God will make up his jewels. And *this*, in raising their bodies, in a far better state than when laid down: reuniting soul and body together: and putting all his children into the most compleat happiness, as to *both*, in the fruition of which they shall be continued for ever. In the prospect of *this*, well may they be bid *to lift up their heads for joy*, concerning whom 'tis declared, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts*. This leads to consider,

IV. How they shall be the *Lord's* in that day?

All that are *jewels* shall then appear in perfection, and be owned by him to whom they belong. Saints are *now* the Lord's, but then they shall be proclaimed to be so: And this,

(1.) To testify his knowledge and approbation of them: That he is acquainted with them, and their relation to him; and is not ashamed to own them for his, whatever obscurity they for a while lay under.

(2.)

(2.) To shame and silence the hard censures to which they were liable from a malignant world, which seeing God's jewels covered with dust, think them only fit to be trampled upon. The heirs of heaven appearing as their master and head once did, without form or comeliness, are despised and rejected as the most inconsiderable upon earth. But how truly despicable will the judgement of man appear in *his day*, in despising those, by the way, whom God in the end will pronounce *jewels*, and say, *They are mine*?

(3.) This will tend to the greater confusion of the *prince of darkness*.

After his horrid suggestions to poor dejected saints, endeavouring to persuade them they were his, and trying all the ways he could to make them so; what a liar will he appear, when God shall declare the same persons *his jewels*, in the distinguishing day when he will make them up?

4. Such a declaration will invite an universal regard to the faithfulness of God, in what he promised to them, and engaged to do for them. All will appear to be fulfilled, when he shall make up his jewels, and say of such, *They are mine*; and, under that character, take them to dwell with him in that presence of God, *where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*.

I need only touch on

Vth thing mentioned, namely, as the title under which God is represented as resolving upon the happiness of his people. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts*. This may be a firm foundation

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foundation of *hope* and *comfort* to those of whom he thus speaks.

(1.) As he has *power* enough to engage for them.

Thousand thousands stand before him; ten thousand times ten thousand minister to him. So that the *Lord of Hosts* can never be at a loss for instruments to preserve his *jewels* to the day when he will make them up; tho' he can stand in need of none, being himself *omnipotent*.

2. As the *Lord of Hosts*, he hath an *absolute sway* over all the enemies of his *jewels*, to restrain and keep them from the hurt they would do: And, *if God be for us, who can be against us?*

3. The *Lord of Hosts*, if this title is referred to his people, it tells us, that the number of those whom he will at last own, and save, is not in itself small.

He will bring *many sons unto glory*; among which he will remember every one as if there was no other. They that go before, and they that follow after, shall at last meet in the same body, and the *resolution* respects all that belong to the glorious company. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels.*

APPLICATION.

1. Are the people of God his jewels, how great, how blessed a change is made by grace upon them? How earnestly should you labour after it, and the evidence of it, that you may know to whom you belong, and what to expect?

2. Is

2. Is there a day in which God will make up his jewels, you that have any good hope through grace of being of the happy number, think of that day, and love it: Think of that day, and be hastning towards it, preparing for it: Think of that day, as fixt and sure, and approaching, and improve the thought to your support and comfort under all the trials of the present state: Particularly these three, *viz.*

The small number of God's jewels.

Their being here mixt.

The separation made between you and them by death.

1. It can't but be matter of concern to such as love God, that *his jewels are so few*; here one, and there another, obscured by the multitudes of others: But as *few* as they seem at present, look to the day when they shall be made up, and make a multitude that no man can number, and please yourselves with the thought, that tho' the way to *Zion* mourns, as having but few travellers in it, at once; in *Zion* or *heaven*, where they are all to meet, there will be no want of company.

2. When afflicted with the thought, that saints and finners are here mixt; the tares and wheat grow together; Remember 'tis to be thus only till the *harvest*: And then the Son of man will take all God's jewels to dwell with him in glory, and shut out of his kingdom every thing that offendeth.

3. What a great loss to our world is every jewel removed by death?

But

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But let it be your relief, that what earth and you have lost, heaven and they have gained. Indeed, they are not *lost*, but *improved*; and you whom God has been gracious to, in converting and forgiving you, shall ere long be, and abide, with them for ever.

S E R-

S E R M O N VIII.

The Unchangeableness of Christ, considered and improved.

HEB. I. 12.

----- But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

TH E S E words are a description of CHRIST, full of comfort to all that fly to *him*; as speaking the *eternity* of his person, and office; being, and perfections.

Whatever changes are every year made in persons and families; JESUS CHRIST is unchanged still, as able and ready to save this year as the last, or any year or age that is gone before. *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

He never refused any that came to him, nor cast off any received by him: And he is vested with the same office; and has the same wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, and love for the discharge of it, that he always had.

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We have the same Lord and head ; the same Redeemer and Saviour ; and applying by faith to him, may hope for the same salvation which *they* found who tried and trusted him here, and are now gone to be with him above.

To open this, and prepare it for use, I shall consider,

I. What Christ is in himself?

II. What his people have found him to be to them?

III. That with respect to *both these*, it may be said of him, *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

I. Let us consider, what Christ is in himself; and this as to his person and office?

1. As to his *person*, He is the eternal Son of God---the second person in the glorious Trinity--who had a being, and a very glorious one, before he appeared in our world, even from everlasting. *John i. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2. As to his *office*, He is mediator between God and man---fitted for it, by assuming our nature into a personal union with the *divine*, that as God and man in one person he might transact with both. Tho' he was not incarnate till the fulness of time ; the office of *mediator* was what he was early appointed to, and consented to undertake ; and so he speaks of himself as *set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.* Prov. viii. 23.

When man had sinned, and lost himself, and needed a Redeemer, he is promised as *the seed of the woman* ; and, in the season fixed, *the word*
is

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is made flesh, and appeared amongst men, by his obedience and suffering to accomplish our redemption which he had undertaken, and all along been carrying on. This is *he* that should come, and no other is to be looked for: The *mercy* promised to the fathers, and now exhibited: HE for whose sake Old-testament believers were received to heaven, (upon account of his sacrifice designed) and as he is now made perfect through suffering, and entred with his own blood into the most holy place, he keeps open the way for all that are to follow.

This is HE that *Jacob* acknowledges as *the angel that redeemed him from all evil*; whom *Job* styles *his Redeemer*, and trusted as such;---whose day *Abraham* rejoiced to see, and *he* saw it;---who at length came forth from the father, and came into the world; and having by dying finished our redemption, has again left the world, and is gone unto the father; and now *ever lives to make intercession*, to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

Thus as to *person and office*, Jesus Christ is the *Son of God and Mediator*.

II. Let us see, what his people have found him to be unto them. And here,

(I.) 'Twas Christ that, in the day of his power, awakened all that are saved to a deep sense of their lost and miserable state; let an uncommon light into the *mind*, discovering both their *guilt and danger*, and making them cry out in earnest, as a man perishing, *What shall I do to be saved? Whither shall I fly from the wrath to come? O my soul, which way can I look, but guilt*

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stares me in the face? And, who can bear the thoughts of that death that is the wages of sin? How fearful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God? How liable am I to do so? But, alas, who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure everlasting burnings? O the sin I have committed! the wrath I have deserved! How shall I get the pardon of the one, or escape the other? I cannot live in such a case as this: But how much more dreadful to die unpardoned, and so to pass into a miserable eternity? To such a sense of their being lost, has Christ brought those whom he came on purpose to seek and to save. Nor has he stopt here, but kindled in them a restless desire of being delivered, and put them upon endeavours after it, and made them willing to be saved by him in the gospel-way.

2. Upon their applying to him, as the result of *this*; how unworthy or full of fears soever, they found him ready to receive: That he remember'd his word on which he caused them to hope, and was faithful to it, that *him that cometh to him he would in no wise cast out.*

When ready to sink under the burden of *sin*, and apprehensions of the divine *wrath*, they cast themselves at his feet, resolving, if they perished, they would die there, and did not know but they might--- O how kindly were they received! How freely forgiven! With what wonder filled, at the hearty welcome vouchsafed; the treatment they met with! Instead of upbraiding them with what they had *been*, or *done*, or *were*; he tenderly bound up their wounds; eased their pains; calm'd their consciences; gave them

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them reason to believe that he was a merciful and faithful high priest, most worthy to be loved and trusted, and that none that did so should ever be left ashamed.

3. Thus passing into the number of his members, from this time forward, he hath dealt most graciously with them during their stay upon earth ;---washing off their sins in his blood ;---subduing their corruptions by his spirit ;---furnishing them with grace sufficient against the powers of darkness ;---teaching and enabling them to pray, and then gave them answers of peace to what he taught them to ask ;---admitting them to intimate communion with him, and in a peculiar manner manifesting himself to them. He has assisted them in their work ; supported them under their burdens ; accompanied them through all the turns of life, and safely guided them by his counsel even unto death. Thus having loved his own, he loveth them to the end !

4. At death he received their departing spirits to be with him in glory ; and has given them security that he will watch over their bodies in the grave, and raise and bring all his people to be intirely with him at the great day.

As a pledge of this, *Enoch* and *Elias* are already with him, and perhaps the bodies of those saints that came forth out of their graves at his resurrection, and went into the holy city, appearing unto many.

However, the perfected spirits of the just make up a glorious company ; every one of which were by Christ prepared for heaven, and at their leaving their bodies conducted to the mansions he

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went before to make ready, bidding them welcome to all the blessedness of that world, and fixing them in it, as what they shall enjoy for ever. This is what believers have found *Christ* has been to them, and done for them who are gone before.

III. As to all this, the text is applicable to him: *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

He is the same in himself, as to his *person* and *office*, God in our nature, the great *Immanuel*, and so the only mediator between God and man.

The same as to his *interest in his father*, and *acceptance with him*: The beloved in whom he is always well pleased.

And with respect to *us*, the same as to his *ability* and *willingness* to save: Neither is there salvation in any other; nor need we look to any but him.

The *satisfaction* he hath made by his death, is full and compleat, as it was not the death of a mere man, but of the son of God, which he is now declared to be with power in his resurrection from the dead. His death and sufferings will never be forgotten; nor the virtue and efficacy of them ever fail. He appears in the midst of the throne, as the lamb that has been slain, and answers all the demands of justice, by shewing the print of his wounds. The dignity of his person put a value on his sufferings; the weight of which, with his willingness to suffer, prove him perfected by it in order to save.

He

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He that was in the form of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant; yea, humbled himself, and became obedient to the death, even the death of the cross. He was cut off, but not for himself. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. We were the offenders, and deserved to die; but that we might be spared, Christ willingly laid down his life, and by dying has made atonement for sin; delivered us from the inevitable necessity of perishing; purchased pardon and grace here, and heaven at last, with power to bestow all on every one that comes to him. He has done this for thousands, and is still the same.

He has no need to repeat his sufferings, or die over again: Nothing is lacking in their merit, or taken off from their efficacy.

He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God: And by that one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.

His death is *plea sufficient* for all that lost souls can need; and in the virtue of this he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

We need not go to any other: He *hath the words of eternal life*: He *hath now*, as well as *formerly*, being unchangeably the same.

With what satisfaction may we read over the scripture-account of what Christ is able and willing to do; and the testimony of his disciples as

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to what he has done for them ; when, after all, it may be added, *Thou art the same, and thy years fail not.*

This is HE whose name is *Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace*, and will be always so.

This is HE that assumed our nature, and died in our room, and by dying overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and *redeemed us unto God by his blood !*

This is HE that rose again from the dead the third day, and declared the price of our redemption paid, death and the grave conquered ; and who ascended in triumph to heaven, to take possession of it in our nature, and make all things ready against his people's coming !

This is HE that so effectually pleaded for their justification and acceptance with God, and answered all charges that could be brought against them ! If they have sinned, he readily answered he had died, and therein paid the price of their redemption, that they may obtain forgiveness, and go free. He carried on the work of grace to perfection, entirely casting out indwelling corruption ; when his followers were tempted, he effectually pray'd that their faith might not fail, and furnished them with grace sufficient to enable them to overcome.

This is HE that enlightened them in darkness ; raised and comforted them when cast down ; promised his spirit to dwell in them ; and was as good as his word. By the power of his grace he kept them faithful to him to the death, and then

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then received their souls to heaven, and crowned them with everlasting life.

APPLICATION.

1. May it be said of Christ, that *he is the same, and his years fail not*? Let this put every christless sinner upon looking out after an interest in him with the same diligence that ever any did.

And *this* for these two plain reasons.

1. You have the same need of Christ, and interest in him, with any that are gone before.

If you are not saved by Christ, you are lost for ever. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved.* Acts iv. 12. Wherefore, when your souls are at stake, and all your hope for another world depends upon an interest in Christ, with what earnestness should you fly to him, with such a moving cry, as that, *Lord save me, or I perish.*

This others have done, and found mercy; and having the same necessity, why should you not shew that your souls are equally dear to you; and that you are as much concerned for their safety as any that are gone before.

Nor are you pressed with mere *necessity*; But,

2. You have the same *encouragement* to come to Christ, under the assurance that he is the same as to his *person* and *office*, his *fitness* for his work, and *delight* in it.

His

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His *power* is not abated ; nor his *grace* lessened ; nor his *invitation* discontinued, to the weary and heavy laden to come to him, for ease and rest ; nor his *promise* forgotten, that him that cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out.

What greater encouragement can you desire or need, than is carried in those words applied to Christ, *Thou art the same, and thy years fail not ?*

Whatever you may say, from the blackness of your case, think what Christ hath done for others ; the work he has undertaken ; the office he bears, and what the scripture affirms of him, that *he is the same* : And do not gratify the great destroyer, by throwing up your hope, and saying, Christ may save others, but cannot save you.

Are your *sins many and great* ? He hath his name *Jesus* on this ground, and to this end, that he might save his people from their sins. He has already done this for others, and he is the same. Say not with Cain, *Your iniquity is greater than can be forgiven* : The *merit* of his death is greater than the *guilt* of all your sins. Let that word be most seriously attended to : *Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out* : Upon no consideration whatever : No unworthiness, or degrees of guilt, or unprofitableness, or number of sins, shall provoke me to reject any one who cometh to me, feelingly sensible of his need of me, earnestly desirous of an interest in me, and resolved to continue seeking after me.---*Sinners*, what can you object to this most full comprehensive promise ?

2. *Despair* is most unreasonable in such as sit under the sound of the gospel ; which tells us of

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of Christ's coming to save sinners, assures us of his having saved the chief of sinners, and represents him as after all *the same*.

3. Let believers rejoice in Christ as unchangeable. On this account such may and should *rejoice evermore*; as well as *pray without ceasing*, and in *every condition give thanks*. This the unchangeable love of a Redeemer demands from them who love him in sincerity; and who, thro' the various circumstances of the present life, are looking and waiting for him.

S E R M O N IX.

Heaven the most defireable Inheritance.

1 PET. I. 3, 4.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

THESE words denote the happy state of believers, and the grateful sense they are to have of it. They are the Apostle's thanksgiving to God in behalf of the elect, discovered to be so thro' sanctification of the spirit, and called to a participation of the benefits of Christ's redemption.

In them several things deserve our notice.
As,

I, What

1. What he blesses God for, *viz.* the wonderful change they had undergone as to *state* and *frame*, being *begotten again*, raised from death to life, from despondency to hope; of children of wrath, and ready to die, thro' fear of dropping into it, made heirs and expectants of the heavenly glory. Blessed be God for such a change as this.

2. The *moving cause* from whence it proceeds: Not our own *merit*, but the divine mercy, and this richly displayed. *Blessed be God, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again.* Abundant mercy indeed, that will raise the heirs of hell to a well-grounded hope of heaven! that will take any of *Adam's* degenerate offspring, all overspread with the leprosy of sin, and worthy to be cast off by him, and by a strange turn of love make them partakers of a divine nature, that they may dwell for ever with him! Glorious grace! Thus *shall it be done to the men whom God delighteth to honour.*

3. The *author and method of working*: God the father for, and thro', his son. 'Tis as the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he becomes the father of mercies to perishing sinners; especially of that abundant mercy manifested in begetting us again to a new life, and hope, which we had forfeited and lost. And the resurrection of Christ, here mentioned, may be referred to *either*, being the ground of *both*: Our spiritual life as to grace, our lively hope of glory, are brought about by Christ's dying, and rising again.

His

His *death* was the *price* of our redemption, and all the blessings of the new covenant ; but the *application* of these depended on his *resurrection*. By this, therefore, his sacrifice is evidenced to be accepted, and himself *declared to be the son of God with power*, mighty to save. In him the Father proclaims himself *well-pleased* ; and for his sake has set open the treasures of grace to be freely communicated as the purchase of his blood. The quickening comforting spirit is come down to raise up a seed to serve him *here*, and be with him *above*. *Blessed be God who hath begotten us again to a lively hope*, both as to *object* and *act*, to an inheritance *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven* ; raising us, by regeneration, to a meetness for it, and giving us the earnest, pledge and assurance of it, by virtue of Christ's resurrection, and our intimate relation to him as our vital head.

Who can forget, or be silent, at such a change as this ! The Apostle, here, might have some respect to the languishing condition which he, and the rest of Christ's disciples, were in, after he was laid in the grave, till his resurrection ; but can't be supposed to exclude the misery and danger of a natural state, with the fear and horror that usually precede the *new birth* ; when, in a sense of sin, and dreadful apprehensions of the divine wrath, the awakened sinner is ready to sink into despair, and die.

O blessed be God, who hath abolished death by the *death* of his son ; and brought life and immortality to light by his triumphant *resurrection* !

begun our salvation by grace ; and, after all our doubts and fears under the spirit of bondage, begotten us again to the dignity of children, and so to a *lively hope of an inheritance in heaven*, the possession of which is sure, tho' for a time reserved within the veil, whither our fore-runner, our risen redeemer, is for us enter'd, (to prepare for our coming) as *the first-born among many brethren*.

Having thus given you a view of the words, what I design from them will come under the following propositions.

I. The children of God by regeneration, are begotten to a glorious *inheritance in heaven*.

II. Tho' they may not presently have full possession, the sense of the mercy display'd in their regeneration, and the ground they have for a *lively hope of the inheritance reserved* in Christ's resurrection, should excite them to the most chearful thanksgiving and praise.

I. *The children of God by regeneration are begotten to a glorious inheritance in heaven.*

In speaking to this, I shall shew,

1. That any are *regenerate*, or begotten again, is the effect of the power and grace of God.

2. Consider their *title* to the heavenly inheritance, and whereon 'tis built.

3. Take a brief view of their *inheritance*, as to its *place*, and *properties*, mentioned in the text. And then apply it.

1. That any are *regenerate*, or begot again, is owing to the *powerful grace of God*. Saints are *born from above*, and in this sense can call no man father upon earth. *Matt. xxiii. 9. For one is their father,*

father, who is in heaven. The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the author of the great transforming change, made by grace upon their souls, whereby they are distinguished from their former selves, and the rest of the world, and brought into a peculiar relation to the Most High. *Of his own will begat he us, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* James i. 18. John i. 13.

In the creation of man, the *Trinity*, as it were, held a council; and the result of it was, his being formed in the likeness, and after the image of God, *morally*, as to the divine qualities where-with his soul was crowned, as well as in regard of its spiritual nature. *God made man upright*; but, alas! how little while did he continue so? Tho' perfectly holy, and able to stand, upon the first temptation he shamefully fell: The noble vine quickly turns into a degenerate plant, and propagates the corruption to his guilty race. Hence, as the *Psalmist* confesses for himself, *Psal. li. 5. we are shapen in iniquity and born in sin*, alienated from the life, and likeness of God; and from rooted enmity not subject to his law, nor indeed can be. The crown is fallen from our head; the glory departed; the divine image lost; the whole nature corrupted; and the wretched creature enslaved to Satan, and led captive by him in the way to death.

This is now our natural state, and who but God can recover us, being thus fallen? regenerate us, being thus depraved? Man, if left to himself, would always remain in his sinful wretched

wretched state. 'Tis impossible for *darkness* to be the cause of *light*, for *enmity* to be productive of *love*, *flesh* of *spirit*. Corrupt degenerate man is ignorant of his deformity, well-pleased in his misery ; and, as if he had suffered no damage by the fall, opposes his recovery. So that he who made man at first, can alone recover him to his primitive excellency, inspire the divine life, and progressively carry it on till the body of death be quite dislodged. To create ; to raise the dead ; to open the eyes of the blind ; to subdue the wills of the rebellious, change the hearts of the vile, and of earthly and sensual make them truly spiritual and holy ; are all the works of *omnipotency*. It requires an infinite unlimited agent to raise up children from stones, to turn a *lion* into a *lamb*, a *clod* into a *star*, or, which is more, a *sinner* into a *saint*.

God is the author of *grace* as well as of *nature* ; and to him the change wrought in the second creation, is equally referred with the first, *Ephes. ii. 10.* No other hand but his *own*, can repair his image on the soul, all over defiled by sin ; and raise up the new creature out of the ruins of the fall. Thus therefore runs the promise : *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.* How often does God attribute this work to himself, that *sinners* may be directed to look to him, and be saved ; and *saints* reminded who made them to differ, and to whom the praise of their recovery is due ? In regard of the *original*, as well as the

end of their *renovation*, saints are called *his*; a people *created* by his power, and formed for his *praise*. *Isai. lx. 21.* And 'tis *the exceeding greatness of God's power*, that is employed with respect to them that believe, (according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead) called for its eminency *the glory of the Father*. To this all the children of the kingdom must ascribe their *renovation*. The vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction by themselves, but the vessels of mercy are by a more divine hand made meet for glory. *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, 2 Cor. v. 5.* 'Tis the work of a *Deity*: which indeed the excellent nature, as well as greatness of the change, plainly bespeaks. How surprizing is it to see a soul, that was just now under the power of corruption, bound down to earth, and seeking his happiness in it, living to flesh and sense, delighting in sin, &c. for such a one, on a sudden, to be turn'd quite about; his heart and feet standing another way; his affections raised and fixed on things above; delighting in the law of God after the inner-man; and endeavouring a conformity to it in his course; bewailing and renouncing sin; denying self; adhering to Christ; pursuing holiness; crucified to the world; looking and longing for *heaven*; incapable of being satisfied, and resolved never to be at rest, till *there*! Who can be the author of such a change as this, but the *father of lights, from whom every good and every perfect gift doth proceed*? The God-like nature communicated, declares its divine original, that saints *are born from above*

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above, from heaven, whither they tend. Highly favoured of God are they who are thus begotten again.

II. We are to consider their *title* to the heavenly inheritance, and whereon 'tis built. And here, supposing all mankind in a lapsed state, 'tis obvious,

(1.) None of the sinful race can have any natural right to the mansions above; but, on the contrary, as depraved, are unmeet for *heaven*, and bound over by guilt to an everlasting *hell*. *The wages of sin is death*: and we have all sinned, and so come short of the glory of God. The Apostle owns for himself, and such as were quickened by grace, that they were *by nature children of wrath even as others*.

(2.) Nor is the *title* spoken of, founded on any temporal advantages, personal or relative, that some enjoy above others; from nearer parents or common providence. Saints have, many times, children destitute of their faith and holiness; and always so, till the divine spirit, in a supernatural way, is pleased to work it. Grace does not run in the blood: heaven is not entailed on the carnal seed of the most religious parents, who cast off the God of their fathers. We find the rich man in hell, notwithstanding his being *Abraham's son*, *Luke xvi. 23*. And as to other excellencies, *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called*, *1 Cor. i. 26*. whilst the poor of this world are chosen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him. *Jam. ii. 5*. Even so,

so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight, Matt. xi. 25.

(3.) That saints are intitled to an inheritance in heaven, is not to be ascribed to any *merit* of their own, but to the *divine grace and mercy*. 'Tis your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, Luke xii. 32. Our *salvation*, in the whole of it, as to the new birth and promised blessedness, springs from hence; and must be resolved into it. Tit. iii. 5, 6. *The wages of sin is death*, in all its kinds, but *eternal life*, to such as we, must, with the highest thankfulness, be owned to be *the gift of God*, the gift of his free astonishing grace, not only without, but contrary to, any desert of ours. We are less than the least of all God's mercies; most worthy of his wrath, and by nature liable to it: And how strange does it sound for a *recovered sinner*, to talk of *meriting heaven*, at the hand of God, to whose patience, and forbearance, 'tis owing that he is out of hell? His *dominion over us*, his *right in us*, and our *dependance upon him* for all that we are, and have, and can do; the infinite obligations we are under to his kindness, and grace, as ransomed and renewed; the defects of our best duties; and the unconceivable glory of the heavenly inheritance, &c. all shew it can never be bestowed on lost sinners, as a debt to their *merit*, but because God delighteth in mercy.

(4.) The heavenly inheritance is purchased by Christ, and bestowed, for his sake, on all the renewed.

If *grace* reigns, in pardoning and saving such as are lost, it must be with the honour of God's
other

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other perfections. For the law of God being broken, *justice* stands as a bar in the sinner's way to heaven, and *guilt* subjects him to *everlasting punishment*. Without blood there is no *remission*, and so no *hope*. But by, or thro', the death of Christ, *justice* is satisfied, and mercy exalted, in order to save. The father proclaims himself well pleased. And *he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

The dignity of Christ's person put an infinite value on his sacrifice, and made it efficacious not only to ransom us from hell, but to be the price of our compleat felicity. On account of his undertaking to make his soul an offering for sin, heaven stood open to old-testament believers; as it does, by virtue of what he has done and suffered, to all since. Thus eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Rom. vi. 23*. Nor is the honour of free Grace hereby lessened. 'Twas of his mere good pleasure that, from all eternity, God would resolve the recovery of any of *Adam's* fallen race. 'Twas *this* that found out a ransom for us, and *laid our help on one mighty to save*. And when all mercy was forfeited, and death deserved, with what astonishment may we read, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son*; that giving him *first*, he might, with him also, freely give us all things else! How glorious is the divine grace, in sending the Redeemer from heaven *thus* to bring us thither!

(5.) Saints are intitled to the heavenly inheritance, by virtue of their union with Christ; by whom it is purchased, and on whom 'tis settled. As many as receive, or believe in, him, to them gives he power *to become the sons of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*, John i. 12. Rom. viii. 16. I Cor. i. 30. I John v. 11, 12.

III. Some of the excellencies of the heavenly inheritance, are next to be considered by us.---- These, indeed, we know but little of at present. Who can fully tell the heirs of heaven what God hath prepared for them that love him? *Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, I John iii. 2. However, the text describes heaven as an inheritance designed for children, and sets it forth,

(1.) As *Incorruptible*; in opposition to principles of decay, and a possibility of being lost. 'Tis a better and a more enduring substance than any thing of this world *Heb. x. 34*. Earthly enjoyments perish in the using; are exposed to a thousand accidents, whereby we may be stript of all, even whilst we live. But in heaven, *no moth can corrupt, or thief break through and steal*. The purchased possession is permanent and sure; subject to no inward decay, or outward violence; can never be forfeited or lost. 'Tis a *city* that hath foundations, *whose builder and maker is God: a kingdom that cannot be moved: an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, Heb. xi. 10. Chap. xii. 28. 2 Cor. v. 1. If we get safe to heaven, the unchangeable love of God, the everlasting merit of Christ, the stability of the covenant

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nant of grace, secure our abode in *that happy world*, to endless ages. How glorious a property of the heavenly inheritance is this? For as it accents the torments of the damned, that they will never end; so it compleats the happiness of the glorified, that it will last, and ever be theirs.

(2.) 'Tis *undefiled*. This *too* adds a lustre to the inheritance of the saints, and endears heaven to them. As a place of perfect holiness, it suits their natures and hopes; draws forth their desires, and affectionate pursuits; and they can say of it, as *David* of the word that leads thither. *It is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it.* Psal. cxix. 140. The regenerate, as such, can't but have their souls grieved, whilst living in a world that lies in wickedness. How seriously do they groan, being burdened, and often vent such complaints as these: *How long shall I dwell in a state of corruption, and feel so much of it in my own soul? O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* But looking upward, they may add, *Blessed be God who hath begotten us to the view and hope of what we breathe after, an inheritance pure and undefiled.* Tho' it is not now with me, as I could wish, as to place or state, my hope enters within the veil, and gives me a chearful prospect of the happy change I shall ere long make as to both. I know whom I have believed, and for what; whither my Redeemer is gone, and how he is employed above. O how far otherwise will it be with me, when I shall be admitted to dwell with him. For into the New Jerusalem there entereth nothing that defileth or that worketh abomination. Sin and sinners have there

no place, nor ever shall. The *city* and *inhabitants* are both unstained; saints will there be saints indeed; presented to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; the objects of his eternal love and delight.

4. 'Tis *unfading*. i. e. The satisfying fulness of the saints inheritance shall never wither, or be lessened by continuance; nor their delight and blessedness therein.

Earthly objects perish in the very fruition; the delights they afford are empty and transitory; affect us like a spark for a moment; and then languish and die. But the saints shall be possessors of an *infinite unchangeable good*, which, like the *sun*, in the most liberal diffusion of light and influence, is always the same. *With God is the fountain of life*, which shall be always flowing, and ever full; and as the *divine perfections* shall never decay, so neither shall *their* joy and blessedness, who dwell in his presence. After millions of years, and ages, they shall equally rejoice in their inheritance, as at the first possession; and have equal reason to do so to eternity.

Heaven is the place where *this* is reserved; which comprehends, and clears, the foregoing properties. 'Tis the *city of the living God*, the *habitation of his holiness*, and therefore incorruptible, undefiled, and incapable of being otherwise. In *heaven* are the brightest displays of the divine perfections, and the fullest communications of God's love and goodness; in seeing and receiving which, the blessedness of the glorious inhabitants will be *unfading*.

This

This is the *inheritance*, *saints are begotten to*, and have some acquaintance with ; but will ere long find the possession inconceivably to exceed the brightest views they could have of it, in the present imperfect state.

APPLICATION.

1. Are saints the begotten of God ? Hence learn; who is reflected upon, when they are persecuted and despised, even *their Father in heaven.* 1 John iii. 1.

2. Since saints are the children of God by regeneration, what fervent love should reign among them ; and how deplorable is it, that it doth no more so ? The Apostle's exhortation is natural and strong, *Eph. v. 2. Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love.* So 1 John iv. 7. How much do they forget their relation as *brethren*, who fall out by the way to their father's house, where they profess they hope to live together in perfect love ?

3. Is there so glorious an inheritance reserved for saints ? Hence view and adore the love of God in Christ, from whence it springs, and thro' whom 'tis conveyed. 1 John iii. 1. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, &c.*

4. Is the inheritance so glorious reserved for saints ? How eminently will the righteousness of God be cleared up, notwithstanding all they want or undergo by the way ?

Here they labour and suffer ; are bated by the world, and seemingly frown'd upon from heaven ; as if it were no profit to serve, or privilege to be related to, the Most High : But, how will all be accounted

accounted for, and abundantly made up, when they shall receive the reward of the inheritance, an incorruptible, undefiled, never-fading inheritance !

5. How calm and serene should they be in their allotted condition upon earth, who are intitled to so glorious an inheritance above ? How unbecoming an *heir of heaven* is it to complain, that he hath not the portion of *worldlings* too ? If I have not my good things *here*, what matter is it how short my stay in this present world is ? As I am not to have my happiness on earth, so neither should I chuse here to dwell. This, O my soul, is no more thy *home* than it is thy *rest* ! The comforts of this life do not deserve so deep a concern ; nor are my sufferings in it *worthy to be compared with the glory ready to be revealed*. If, then, I am an heir of that glory, look up, O my soul, thereto ; often refresh thyself therewith. What strength may I derive from thence, to support me under the burden of life, and encourage me chearfully to go through even *the valley of the shadow of death* ; it being but the dark entry into the heavenly felicity ?

Lastly, How infinitely are we concerned to examine, and ascertain, our title to this most glorious inheritance ? Whilst under prevailing doubt as to *this*, with what fervour should I breathe forth my soul, *who* am passing on to an everlasting world, and know not how it will go with me there ? Whether I shall be received into the *inheritance of the saints in light* ; or cast into outer darkness, to lie down in eternal sorrow ? As for you who are *begotten again to a*
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lively hope, what the text suggests, is to you matter of everlasting thanksgiving and praise. Remember the grace that made you to differ; how *early* your salvation was thereby resolved; that it is still carrying on, and will be ere long perfected. Let God have the praise due unto his name, on these accounts.

How *pleasantly are the lines fallen to you?* What a goodly heritage is reserved for you? And tho' you see not your *Redeemer*, or the *purchased possession*, yet knowing that he liveth, and believing in him, you have reason to rejoice, *with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. You are equally near to *death* and *heaven*; and, at the end of your lives, are to receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. To which, yet, a great addition is to be made at the day of Christ's appearing. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your minds; be sober, and hope to the end, and rejoice in hope of that grace and glory that are to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

To him I commit you; and to him be glory for ever.

S E R M O N X.

The Believer's Hope in the Mercy
of Christ.

J U D E 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

OUR blessed Lord being gone to heaven, to prepare a place for his disciples, with a promise of coming again ; 'tis natural to enquire, what they are to do in the mean time ? How they are to carry it, during his absence, with respect to his return ? As to which, we have here a proper answer : *Keep yourselves, &c. Don't grow cold in your affection, or obedience, to your heavenly father : Let your fervour be kept up, and still promoted : Beware of a lukewarm indifferent temper, as if your labour were in vain in the Lord. Remember your choice of God for yours ; his love to you, and your profession of love to him ; and whom you have believed, and trusted to bring you to the enjoyment of him.* And thus, *Keep yourselves*
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in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

'Tis the latter part of the words, which I now design to speak to ; and the things obvious to be considered, are these :

I. That *mercy* is the ground on which we are to look for eternal life.

II. How it is the *mercy* of our *Lord Jesus Christ* ?

III. How well eternal life deserves to be thus emphatically exprest, *The mercy* ?

IV. What is implied in looking for it ?

Lastly, The use.

I. *Mercy* is the ground on which saints themselves are to look for eternal life.

This is what the *best* will need, and on which they are to depend : The source and spring of our blessedness, from whence it is to be expected *now*, and ascribed thereto at last.

Mercy, as attributed to God and Christ, is to be taken either,

1st. For that attribute whereby he is inclined to pity, and help, the miserable ; his loving kindness, grace, compassion, freely working to such as are in misery : Or,

2dly, For the effects and fruits of this ; his help afforded ; suitable boons or blessings actually granted. From hence God is said to *have mercy on us*, or *shew mercy to us* : And this either in more *common* and ordinary instances, (the good that he does, and extends to all men and creatures) or *special* to his children and chosen, the vessels of mercy. Pardon, and sanctification ; their salvation begun, and hereafter to be completed

pleated in eternal glory ; all this is the fruit of *mercy*.

And thus we are to take it in this place ; with reference to the great and wonderful effects of mercy, to be conferred upon all the faithful at the appearing of their Lord ; when they shall be like *him* ; be owned, acquitted, and solemnly crowned by *him* ; have a full discharge from all the misery they feel or fear, and obtain salvation with eternal glory. For this the Apostle prays in behalf of one *Onesiphorus*, 2 *Tim.* i. 18. *That he may find mercy with the Lord in that day.* The *mercy* to be then conferred, will be *mercy indeed* ; as it springs from the freest love, and will discover the richest grace ; As it will be manifested to such as were once in a low, poor, miserable state, mourning under *sin*, molested with *temptation*, exercised with affliction, hated and ill-treated by an angry unkind world, dying daily, and liable at length to drop into the grave. O the mercy ! to have all tears wiped from their eyes, sorrow and sighing for ever cease, and exchanged for songs of deliverance and compleat salvation !

But it is especially called *the mercy* as promised, and to be bestowed on those that could never deserve it ; had deserved, were liable to, and had reason to expect, the contrary ; till God, of his abundant mercy begat them again to a lively hope, &c. 1 *Pet.* i. 3, 13.

Now the same *mercy* that resolved upon and begun our salvation, must at last finish it. Tho' heaven is a reward, 'tis a reward of *grace*, not of *debt*. 'Tis from the divine bounty, the infinite goodness of God ; not due to the merit of our

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our obedience or sufferings. Accordingly Christ tells his disciples, *Luke xii. 32.* 'Tis your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; which as children and heirs, not as purchasers, he will at last call them to the possession of. Being justified by his grace, they are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, which he hath freely promised. *Tit. iii. 7.* And his promise graciously made, and which he will not fail to perform, is all the ground of our claim; not any worth or merit of our own.

II. We are next to enquire, how it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ?

This is attributed to him,

1. As the purchaser of it.

Man, in his first creation, was little lower than the angels: But turning rebel against his maker by wilful transgression, he at once forfeited the promised felicity, and became liable to the threatened death. Here, now, lies the world undone by sin, sinking into the deepest deserved misery. And tho' mercy looked down with a melting eye, pitying us in our blood; yet wisdom and justice required, that so great a wrong done the divine Majesty should not be passed over without reparation made; and no more favour shewn to wretched sinners without a sacrifice offered for sin to turn away wrath. Now that the whole earth could not afford. The Son of God, therefore, the second person in the glorious Trinity, steps in, offering himself to be our Mediator; and having assumed our nature, dies in our room, and so satisfies justice, and makes way for mercy to reign in order to our recovery. By this means,
peace

peace is made, God highly honoured, and heaven secured to all that believe on him. *This is the record that God has given us eternal life in his son,* 1 John v. 11, 12.

2. In point of *preparation*.

The blessedness Christ shed his blood to purchase upon earth, he is now employed to make ready above: For this end does he live, as our advocate with the Father, in virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, to make intercession and *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*, to keep open the way into the Holy of Holies, and bring us thither.

These were his comfortable words to his disciples, as he was about to leave them: *In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you.* John xiv. 2. With respect to *this*, he is styled *the fore-runner for us enter'd* into the excellent glory, where faith and hope are to ascend after him, entering into that which is within the veil, observing how he is there employed for our good, and waiting the blessed fruit of all. And he not only prepares *heaven* for his people, but them *for heaven*; sending down his spirit, to *make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, and to be *his seal and earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession.* Eph. i. 14. By his direction, and influence, he is able, and has undertaken, to *keep them from falling, and present them blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

3. In respect of *actual donation*.

So

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So abundantly is the Father pleased with what Christ hath done and suffered, as that he hath advanced him to his right hand, in full dominion over both worlds, to receive and dispense the fruit of his merits as to *grace* and *glory*. So that he is, now, a prince and Saviour to give repentance, and remission of sins; and he hath *power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the father hath given him.*

And as he now rules, so he will at last come, as final judge of quick and dead, to give to every one his portion; when how ravishing will be the voice of *mercy* with which he will bespeak his disciples and followers: *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Mat. xxv. 34. *This is the kingdom resolved, purchased, and prepared for you. That which I told you of, promised to you, and which you have trusted me for, I now actually bestow, and adjudge you to. My blood was not shed in vain on earth, nor has my intercession been ineffectual in heaven. Since my resurrection ye have waited my return, relying on my power and merits, to deliver you from wrath, and looking for mercy to eternal life. Now all things are ready, and I am come to satisfy your desires, fulfil your prayers, give you the end of your faith and hope: enter therefore into the joy of your Lord.*

Thus eternal life is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. How well it deserves to be thus emphatically expressed, *The Mercy?*

Now it may be thus styled,

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I. As

1. As 'tis *that mercy*, which saints were *chosen* to, and which God always had them in his eye and heart to bring them to the possession of. This is the first resolve of *eternal love*, and which he is carrying on through all the revolutions of time. As to *this*, the Redeemer is appointed to be their *head*, the captain of their Salvation, to bring them to the inheritance, which, in him, they were chosen to; and which, in the necessary way of faith and holiness, union with him and conformity to him, they should assuredly attain, *according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.* Eph. i: 4.

Well may it be called *the mercy*, about which the thoughts of God were employed before the world was. How eternally sweet will it sound among the glorified above, to say, *this is the happiness our heavenly father from eternity resolved for us?*

2. As 'tis *most free*. This is the *pure fountain* from whence it springs, *The gift of God*. 'Tis what he will bestow, not only on *undeserving creatures*, but *ill-deserving sinners*. That the children of wrath should be made the children of God; that such as were justly liable to eternal death should be delivered and raised to everlasting life; that heaven should be the inheritance of such as had nothing to claim and expect but hell for their portion; oh the mercy herein discovered! 'Twas *this*, that resolved to bestow so great a happiness on any of *Adam's* sinful race, when all might have been left: 'Twas *this* that employed wisdom to find out a ransom, that laid help on one that is mighty to save, and that accepted the satisfaction made

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made by another, and appointed the way of life, and called *us* rather than *others* to expect, and hope, and look for it. How well from its *freeness* does it deserve a special note, *the mercy!*

3. As purchased with the most *invaluable* price. For it cost not only the prayers, and tears, but the precious blood of the Son of God.

Consider, O my soul, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. O behold him, descending from the throne of glory, assuming our nature, appearing in the form of a servant, persecuted as soon as born, despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How low did he stoop, how much did he undergo, as to temptations, trials, weaknesses, wants, necessities and infirmities through the course of his life! Read over the story of his *love* and *death*. Behold him stript, scourged, arraigned, condemned, buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and led away to be crucified; see him hanging upon the cross, his hands and feet nailed to the ignominious tree, his side pierced, his heart open, his blood running out. Behold his *wounds*, observe his *tears*, hear his *groans*, from the torments he endures without, and greater agonies within; the wrath of God, the rage of earth and hell, meet upon him. Was there any sorrow like his sorrow? Think of *this*, and then look up to heaven; eternal life, this is the possession purchased by the blood of thy dearest Lord; that which the Redeemer died that you might obtain, and open a new and living way into.

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What

What words are big enough to describe such a *mercy* as this, or their happiness who shall be received thereto?

4. The mercy *promised* as the crown and end of all others. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* 1 John ii. 25. the grand comprehensive promise, into which all the foregoing mercies run as streams into the ocean.

This is the result of all the great transactions of the divine wisdom and love, power and goodness, that was so early determined, so dearly purchased, so diligently prepared, with so much cost and care made ready, on which the faith and hope of saints are fixed; the glorious prize held up before them in the gospel, to which their aims are directed, and in which their happiness lies. Abstracted from this how poor and mean are all the enjoyments of the world? How little would it signify to be rich and great, prosperous and successful, to live in ease, pomp and pleasure, for a time; and then die and fall short of the blessedness summed up in everlasting life?

And as to spiritual mercies, should we particularly go over them. This adds a value to our *justification*, as it is justification of life, removing all bars that stood in the way of our entrance into the heavenly rest.

This makes the love of God so wonderful in our *adoption*, as therein we are made *heirs* as well as *sons*; heirs of God and the blessedness that lies in the enjoyment of him, in the desire and hope of which believers have so much pleasure, and shall not be disappointed. *God is not ashamed to be called their God, having prepared for them*
a city.

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a city. Heb. xi. 16. And what God prepares how full must it be? Which leads me to what is farther implied in it.

5. *The mercy*, as unconceivably great and full, unmixed and complete; to be measured only by the infinite perfections of that God who is to be enjoyed, and the vast capacities of the immortal soul to be filled up. Answerable is it to that *infinite love* that resolved it, the *infinite price* that went to purchase it, and the *infinite grace* designed to be glorified in it, being vouchsafed to worthless creatures. What a ravishing surprize will it be, to saints at their entrance into the invisible kingdom, to find how far it exceeds all the thoughts and conceptions, and the best accounts they had heard of it by the way; that the one half was not told them, nor ever could, being too big for words. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him.*

6. *The mercy*, as most seasonable, and therein most sweet, upon account of forgoing misery.

After so much sorrow and suffering, labour and travel, tears and sighs, conflicts with sin, Satan and the world, from the numberless evils we here endure, or are liable to, to pass by dying to eternal life. O the mercy!

7. *The mercy*, as most suitable.

To be with God and Jesus; wholly taken up in love and praise; to adore the perfections, be satisfied with the likeness, and filled with the love of God; to keep an eternal Sabbath to him, &c. This is what their natures are suited to, their desires and hopes reach after, and which eternal life is designed to satisfy.

8. *The mercy*, as reserved, and therein most sure.

'Tis the inheritance of the saints in light; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, reserved in heaven, above the reach of enemies and danger.

To this they are begotten; and having their hope founded on the word and oath of God, *that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them*; 'Tis a mercy in sure hands: our Redeemer is above, in full possession: and though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet this we know, that when he who is our life shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

9. *The mercy* as peculiar and distinguishing the inheritance of a few, *Luke xii. 32. Fear not, little flock, 'tis your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* This is that which the most despise and neglect, and so will miss.

Lastly, The mercy, as always to endure.

Eternal life.

'Tis *life* for its excellency, and *eternal* for its duration; a life free from all evil, and in the full possession of all good, of all that is *desirable*, all that is *delightful*.

O the difference between the present life of saints, and that which they shall ere long enjoy! This is the valley of tears, which *there* shall be quite dried up. Here much of their time is spent in sighs and groans, the signs of imperfection and misery, which *there* shall have no place.

O happy life, where none are sick or sorrowful, mourn or die; where we shall no more be in heaviness through manifold temptations without, or corruption within; where there will be no sin or suffering to lament, in ourselves or others! They that, *now*, belong to Christ shall *there* be with him in the presence of God, where there is *fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for ever more.*

I now go on to the

IV. And last thing preparatory to the Application, *viz.* To consider what is implied in looking for it.

Now this, in general, comprehends the whole duty of a Christian with reference to the future everlasting blessedness; eying of it; waiting and praying for it; considering of it; a solicitous concern about it; endeavouring to make it sure; hastning to it; aiming at it; pressing towards it as our scope and end, in a sense of its weight and worth, necessity, certainty, and near approach; with serious diligence preparing for it; that we may be found of our desired Lord in peace, and owned and accepted of him, have confidence and not be ashamed before him, be bid to enter into his everlasting kingdom and joy. This is a temper and disposition becoming saints; and enjoined them by the gospel.

Particularly,

This *looking* implies,

1. That our minds and thoughts are much taken up about it.

What, O my soul, deserves thy most frequent serious thoughts, if not *eternal life*? What in all this world is comparable to it? *Life!* not a transitory, sinful, afflicted, miserable one; but full of *bliss* and *glory*; a life in the presence and fruition of God, never to end, and joined with *eternity*. A few cursory thoughts are not enough for *this*, and would be as ineffectual to warm our hearts, and cherish the divine love, as the transient glimpses of the *sun* would be to the ripening of fruit, on which it seldom shines, and when it does, soon withdraws. How much is contained in these two words, *eternal life*?

Eternal! how great and awful, solemn and awakning, is the sound of it? *Eternity*, approaching, and what I am entering upon! *eternal life*, to be enjoyed and possessed by such as *We!* we that are in a vale of tears, urged with a thousand calamities, weary of the world, as finding it all vanity and vexation, and hated by it. We that are within view of the grave; for persons in our case to be told of *eternal life*, beyond it, to have the heavenly glory unveiled and shine in our view, to hear of the *mercy of Christ*, and eternal life, as the gift of it, what should engage and command our most intense *meditation* if not this?

2. 'Tis keeping faith in exercise with reference to it.

By *Faith* things to come are, as it were, made present; and things unseen clothed with that light and evidence as to attract and influence as if they did appear. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, *Heb. xi. 1.* By this we are to look at *eternal*

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nal life, not as a mere probability, but as what will ere long certainly take place.

Come then, O my soul, view it as real, and what thou canst not but own transcendentally great. Do not stagger at the promise through unbelief, it being of infallible certainty. The *security* is as firm as the *mercy* is great. How safely may I rest on his word as to what *he* hath promised before the world began, (1 *Tit.* i. 2.) who cannot deceive or be deceived, fail or change. All his promises are *yea* and *amen* in Christ; and how oft have they been verified in my own experience? In how many instances have I seen and observed his word fulfilled! He hath laid help on one mighty to save: *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.* 2 *Tim.* iv. 12. I know who is in possession of the everlasting kingdom, which 'tis the Father's good pleasure to give to them that love him. Methinks I see him within the veil, as our advocate with the Father, carrying on the designs of love. Methinks I hear him say, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* O the blissful happy day, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe! Methinks I see him descend with a shining train, bidding them *awake and sing that dwell in the dust.* With what triumph do they that sleep in him arise? How brisk is every look, how calm and full of joy their breasts? how glorious, all, and like their Lord himself, by seeing him as he is?

3. 'Tis a setting our hearts upon it, and entertaining earnest desires after it. Life and immor-

talities brought to light by the gospel, demands our love and choice, as greatly preferable to all that the world can offer. While men of the world seek their portion *below*, this is the duty and character of such as are risen with Christ, to *set their affections on things above, where their Redeemer and their treasure is.* Matt. vi. 24. *The fashion of this world passeth away*; their happiness is dying, and will shortly be at an end, who place it in any thing here. Come then, O my soul, no longer set thine eyes on that which is not. Look upwards to the mansions Christ is preparing in his father's house, whither he will bring all his saints to live with him; to live free from sin and sorrow, labour and suffering, in perfect bliss and joy, and glory to all eternity. This is the Life I choose; and renounce all this world in order to obtain. Lord, put me not off with my portion here. If I may find *mercy* with Christ in that day, and from his mercy obtain *eternal life*; beyond *that* nothing is to be desired, and short of *that* nothing can satisfy. This is to look for the mercies of Christ.

O that, by perfect holiness, I were meet for the state and work of departed saints.

What renewed soul can look up to heaven, and not desire it? Or hear the Redeemer proclaiming, *Behold I come quickly*, to take you to myself, and not be led to answer, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.* O cure this sin and corruption that keeps me at such a distance from thee! and then how gladly would I be brought nearer them, where thou art, to behold thy glory.

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4. 'Tis a patient waiting till you are called hence, to enter into that eternal life, the mercy of Christ will assuredly bestow, *Heb. vi. 12. Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

The *beatifical vision* is for an appointed time; and tho' it tarry, believers are to wait for it; because at the set time it will surely come, and will not longer tarry. And he that believeth will not make an *undue* haste, *Isa. xxviii. 16.* The mercy is great believers wait for; the ground sure they wait upon. And as they have need of *patience*, they have reason for it too. *James v. 7.*

Come then, O my soul, let thy desires be earnest as to thy expected blessedness, the mercy of Christ; but let patience have its perfect work, both as to the absent good in waiting for it, and with respect to the intervening evil, to bear and go through it. Let my longing be temper'd with calm submission, that I may never accuse my Lord with forgetfulness or delay. I would not be weary of the work God has given me to do; nor sink under the burdens he will have me to bear; but by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and then rely on his promise and pleasure, to bestow eternal life. I am secure as to his faithfulness, and shall never on his part be left ashamed. Surely there is an end, and my expectation shall not be cut off. And how little while need a few years on earth appear, in the way to that blessedness that shall never end? And as to the trials and troubles of the present life, they are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

I know my Redeemer will at last appear, and if
be

he will take me to himself to behold his glory; I submit to his determination when it shall be. I am not insensible of my mournful distance from him, and the evils I at present labour under, or am liable to: I know it would be much better with me above, than here: But 'tis he that sent me into the world, and gave me my work, and I wait his will to be called away; labouring, whether present or absent, to be accepted of him. I know on what ground alone I am to look for eternal life, viz. as the gift of mercy to the most unworthy. I remember from how low and miserable a state I am raised to any hope of it, and title to it; and tho' my Redeemer and treasure be above, and my heart too; yet in patience would I wait his pleasure to be called up to the full possession.

Lastly, Serious diligence in preparing for it, and watchfulness that we do not come short, or be found unready.

We are to stand with our loins girt, and lamps burning, expecting our Lord, as willing to be found of him in peace in that day. Can I think that my Lord is coming to bestow eternal life, and shall I not prepare to meet him? Who would not strive, and pray, and watch, and run, and hold out to the end, that we may obtain mercy, mercy bestowing eternal life.

This is to look for, and hasten to, the coming of Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. Is it *mercy* that bestows *eternal life*, how unreasonable is the sin of *despair*?

2. Is it the *mercy of Christ*, how destructive *their folly* who seek it any where else? *Neither is their salvation in any other.*

3. What

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3. What obligations are we under to Jesus Christ, who hath purchased eternal life for such as were by nature children of wrath, and is gone to prepare it for them?

4. How deservedly precious is Christ to them that believe, as having purchased for them *eternal life*, and this by his own *suffering* and *death*? How frequently should they shew forth that death of his, on which their hope of it is built, and then practically look for his second coming, when to those that thus look for him, he will appear *without sin unto salvation*.

S E R M O N XI.

The Blessedness of them that die in
Christ.

REVEL. XIV. 13.

*And I heard a voice from heaven, saying
unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord, from hence-
forth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that
they may rest from their labours ; and
their works do follow them.*

THESE words are a voice from heaven concerning the state which those dead in Christ are removed to : And none are more fitted to afford consolation to such as are left for a while mourning behind them, than they.

Our blessed Lord tells his disciples, when they were ready to sink at the news of his departure, *John xiv. 28. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice ; because I said, I go unto the Father.* Now every believer, upon dying, goes up to be with him ; and that we may not sorrow, as persons without hope for the departure of any such, we
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are told here in the text, that they are not lost by ceasing to live in our world, but advanced to a far better life than this: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*

In the words we have these things observable.

1. A solemn declaration of the happiness of believers taken hence by death; and this commanded to be written, *that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.*

2. The time when their happiness begins, *namely,* at death, or upon their dissolution: *from henceforth.*

These words some refer to that grievous persecution, represented to St. *John* in vision: In the view of which he cries out, *Here is the patience of the saints,* i. e. This will be a season or day, wherein they, whose lot is cast in it, will have uncommon sufferings to exercise their *patience*, and try their *faith*. In regard of which, it may be said of them, If in this life only they had hope in Christ, they would be of all men the most miserable. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth,* i. e. They, by dying now, are released from what they at present endure, and what others that stay after them, in this life, must longer feel: Their life on earth, and their labours, shall conclude together. How far soever they were thought from being happy whilst they lived, they shall be happy indeed after they are dismissed by death from the troubles of this present state.

But we may take the word *henceforth*, to respect not only the peculiar sufferings saints may

sometimes endure in this life, from which a release by dying will be a privilege; but to point at somewhat consequent upon dying in an after-state, viz. the felicity they shall enter upon as soon as released from this state of trial. Their dissolution shall lead to their joyous rest and exaltation. *Blessed are the dead, even from henceforth, who die in the Lord*: As soon as number'd among the dead, they are among the blessed; *Blessed are the dead*.

3. We have a confirmation of this, by one that fits them for heaven, and knows the state they shall be in there. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*; i. e. How little soever of this appears to flesh and sense, 'tis nevertheless a reality: *Yea, saith the Spirit*.

4. A specification of their blessedness, or that wherein it consists; namely, a rest from their painful labours in this world, and such a rest as is followed with the enjoying of the reward of them all in another. The comfortable truth into which all may be summed up, is this Doctrine: *They are blessed indeed who die in the Lord*. After a life of trial and probation, tending towards heaven, they make an happy change by dying, as being to be admitted into it. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*.

In speaking to this, I shall endeavour to shew,
I. What it is to *die in the Lord*, and who may be said to do so.

II. That *from henceforth* they are *blessed indeed*.

III. Wherein their blessedness consists, according to the account of it in the text.

IV.

IV. For what reason it is so solemnly proclaimed, and ordered to be recorded: Which will lead to the *Application*.

I. What it is *to die in the Lord*, and who may be said to do so.

Some understand *this*, of dying for the Lord, and so refer it to *Martyrs*, those that die for his sake, and seal the truth of their profession of him with their blood. And no doubt these are included. And for the encouragement of such, to meet and hold through the sharpest trials, such a voice from heaven is ordered to be written; to assure them, that whatever they lose *for Christ*, though even life itself, they shall be no losers *by him*. Whatever sorrows or sufferings lead on to death, or are joined with it, they shall be more than recompenced with the felicity that follows: *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*. But, though *Martyrs* are included, 'tis not to be restrained to these; but holds true of all that are christians indeed, departing this Life in the faith of Christ, and united to him. The blessedness here promised is common to all believers, and not peculiar to *Martyrs*; but the one, as well as the other, at death, rest from their labours, and have their works following them. Whatever degree of glory *Martyrs* may have above others, ordinary Christians shall have their blessedness compleat at their death. *Martyrs* and *confessors die in the Lord*, as they die in his quarrel: And so do all true Christians, as by faith they are said to be implanted into him, and cleave to him whilst they live, and go hence members of his mystical

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body, belonging to him by an union which death itself cannot dissolve.

These are persons who, in general, may be said to *die in the Lord*. With reference to *which*, I might here consider,

1. What is *supposed* to be necessary to it, as to their state, whilst they live.

2. What is *included* in it, as to their temper and frame, when they come to die.

1. What is *supposed* to be necessary to it, as to their state, whilst they live.

And here 'tis plain, they *that die in the Lord*, must first *live* in him. *That is*, As to the *principle* of their life, they must be quicken'd, and made alive, by him : As to the *work* of their life, they must walk after him : As to the *scope* of their life, they must live to him.

(1.) They are such as are quickened and made alive, *by* the Lord, and ever after live in a dependance upon him. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*; who quickeneth whom he will. By the *spirit* of life he brings his people into a spiritual union with him; and thereupon animates, and dwells in, them. Hence, saith the *Apostle*, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20.

In *his strength* they go forth to the discharge of every duty, resisting every temptation, bearing every burden, &c. The life they live in the flesh, is by the faith of the son of God; and through him strengthening them, they can do all things. They come unto God *by him*; hope for acceptance *in him*; looking for all mercy through him; knowing that without him they can do

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nothing. *Christ is their life*, as they are quickened, assisted, and governed by him.

(2.) As to the *work* of their life, *they walk after him*; endeavouring to have the same mind in them that was also in Christ Jesus, and then to walk and act as he did. Such a one carefully marks the *temper* Christ discovered, the *steps* he took, and daily labours to be like him in *both*. In running the race that is set before him, he is *looking unto Jesus*. Heb. xii. 2. This was one great end of Christ's appearing in the world, in a body of flesh, to obey and suffer; and by his behaviour in *both*, to leave us an example that we should follow his steps. 1 Pet. ii. 21. And all that would prove their interest in him, are so to walk, as he also walked. 1 John ii. 6. He came from heaven, to lead us thither, and mark out, by his example, the course we are to take through this world, as ever we would arrive at the blessedness he is gone to make ready in another. He was *holy, harmless, undefiled*; continually employed in doing his Father's will, while he lived; and with the same readiness he submitted to the bitterest sufferings and death, saying, *Father, not my will, but thine be done*. And thus they are to walk after him, as their pattern.

(3.) As to the *scope* of their life, They are, and ought to be, such as *live to him*. As they receive all *from* him, so all should be used *for* him: *For this end Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and living*; and that believers, both in life and death, should be devoted to him, to whom they are so infinitely obliged. He delivered them from going down into the pit, when they were children of wrath;

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sent his spirit to quicken them, when they were dead in trespasses and sins: whence the Apostle speaks it as the sense of all believers, *The love of Christ constraineth us*, as made alive by his grace, to live to his glory. Not to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again, they desire to live. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. They remember with thankfulness what he has done and suffered for them: His honour and interest have the chief room in their affections; and so his glory be promoted, they count not their lives and blood too dear to be spent and poured out for him. Dying in the Lord supposes, that such are, and abide, in him as long as they live.

2. Let us see what this *includes*, as to their temper, when they come to die.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; that is, that die,

(1.) *In submission to his will*; he having the fullest right to dispose of them as he pleases.

Among those that are in Christ, none of them liveth to himself; for *whether*, saith the Apostle, *we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's*. Our lives are at his service, and our death at his disposal, to order *when*, and *where*, and *how* it shall overtake and carry us off; and we should be willing it should. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

(2.) *Dying in the Lord* includes a dying *in a dependance upon him*, for life and immortality after death, as what he hath purchased and promised, and will assuredly bring his people to. They are his own words, *Because I live, ye shall live also*; and this as to both parts; the soul at their *dissolution*, and both soul and body at the *resurrection*.

Upon this ground dying *Stephen* prays, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*; committing it with firm trust into his hand; and in doing so relying on his merit, intercession, power and grace, to be brought to the life and glory Christ had purchased and promised. And the expiring believer, when he doth thus, may be said *to die in the Lord.*

(3.) *Dying in the Lord* includes a *sincere desire to be with him*, as far better than to be here. Whatever flesh and sense may plead, we feel that *whilst at home in the body we are absent from the Lord*: And seeing there is no being present with him, but by a *dissolution*, we are willing, with the Apostle *Paul*, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, than present in the body, and absent from the Lord. We have a natural inclination to continue in the body; but this is over-ruled by grace, to that degree, that we like this better, to lay down these our earthly tabernacles, as knowing the advantage we shall receive thereupon, even to be immediately introduced into Christ's glorious presence; which is a just reason why we should make it our choice.

Thus after a life spent in walking with Christ, by their going hence in obedience to him, dependance upon him, and desires to be with him, believers may be said *to die in the Lord.* This brings me to the

II^d Thing, *viz.* That *henceforth believers are blessed indeed.*

They are here proclaimed to be so, by a voice from heaven; which can't be supposed to utter a *fiction*: And it is commanded to be recorded as a standing ground of support to the church in all

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ages; and it is again confirmed by the testimony of the *spirit*, that there may be no room for dejection or doubt. The *Apostle* was so fully persuaded of this, that tho' he enjoyed as much of *heaven* as any did, or perhaps could, upon *earth*, he expresses his desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, as what he concluded far better than to abide longer on earth. It may seem strange, that *death* should make way for the believers blessedness; that they should have any advantage by that which *nature* abhors and shrinks from; be no losers, but gainers, by leaving the world, and all the enjoyments of it, and having their bodies turned into the grave, and their souls dismissed into a state they never saw. *This* may seem strange; but nevertheless 'tis true: The king of terrors shall convey them to the fullest joy, and the common enemy promote their felicity, even when it seems to strip them of all. How awful soever a dissolution may appear, it holds true, that *blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*. But this leads to the

III^d General, *namely*, to consider their blessedness according to the account given of it in the text. They that die in the Lord are said to be blessed, as *resting from their labours*, and as *their works do follow them*.

1. The first part of their blessedness is negative, *They rest from their labours*: Which must be taken as inclusive of all the evils which here they groaned under, and were liable to.

1. To begin with those which *sense* is most apprehensive of; the diseases, pressures, wants and pains that afflict and grieve the outward man.

Many

Many are these afflictions of the righteous. Their spirits are often bowed down by frail distemper'd bodies, under which they suffer more than from all the enemies they have in the world. What wearisome days and restless nights do they endure from what they feel in themselves, and from what they feel by sympathizing with others? But now, these manifold infirmities and heavy burdens, these weaknesses, diseases, and numerous calamities, which saints are liable to while they live, shall all be left behind at death. Upon their remove from hence, God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his saints; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for all these former things are passed away. *Rev. xxi. 4.*

2. At death, Believers shall be freed from *Satan's temptations*, and placed out of the danger of his wiles and fiery darts. The day of their dissolution will end the conflict with that potent politic adversary, and let them out of a world of which he is stiled the God. *2 Cor. iv. 4.*

Now considering their own weakness, and the strength and subtilty, malice and cruelty of the enemies with which they have to deal, how estimable a part of their blessedness will it be, to be called out of the field of battle, and lodged where that wicked one, with all his instruments, shall cease from troubling, and where the weary shall be at rest? *1 Pet. v. 8. Job iii. 17.*

3. At death they shall rest from all their labour and trouble, by reason of *indwelling sin*. How feelingly does the Apostle complain of this? *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from*

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from the body of this death? Rom. vii. 24. And so far as any are renewed, they see reason to join with him.

'Tis matter of grief and shame to them, to think that they are yet so unlike to God, can do so little for him; and that in so poor a manner, a thousand flaws attending their best services; and that they so often offend him by omission of duty, and doing what he forbids: But complaints of this kind shall cease with their last breath; and all ground of them be for ever removed.

2. 'Tis added, as the other part of their blessedness, *Their works shall follow them.*

If you ask, *What works?* I answer, All the works suited to heaven, that were here begun; such as loving, adoring and praising God, which shall be continued above in a more easy and perfect manner. *All that die in the Lord, die to live with him, in that presence where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.*

Moreover, all the *works* they have done for God and Christ, to advance his glory, and serve his interest, prepare themselves for his kingdom, and to help on others thither too. These works go before, and shall follow them, to that place and state to which they themselves are taken, *namely*, to heaven. They follow so as to enter with them.

If it be inquired, *how?* The answer is. In the most *endearing manner*, *namely*,

1. In God's faithful *remembrance* of what they have done, and endured, in the present state for his glory. *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed to-*
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ward his name, &c. *Heb. vi. 10.* There is a register kept in heaven, in favour of those who are tending thither, and of what they do becoming their character upon the way. In an evil day, when *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, 'tis said, the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. Malac. iii. 16.*

2. Their works shall follow them, in the recompence of reward which God will bestow upon them, not as deserved by their labours; but as graciously promised to them: *And faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.*

Upon this account, they are bid to be *stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as they know their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. xv. 58.* It is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you: *And to you, saith the Apostle, who are troubled, rest with us. 2 Theff. i. 6, 7.* *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;* as he to whom they belong, will thus bespeak them: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Matt. xxv. 21, 23.* As soon as the soul of a believer leaves the body, it enters upon a felicity that will make it worth the while to die; for 'tis made perfect in holiness, and received to heaven, there to dwell with its Lord for ever. Their *place* is most glorious; their *state* most perfect; their *work* most desirable; the *company* most endearing; angels, and all
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the children of the kingdom, all of them transcendant. The *blessedness* into which they pass by dying, is purchased by *infinite merit*, prepared by *almighty power*, and will be bestowed by *infinite love*; and so will infinitely exceed all the conceptions they could have of it in time, and furnish them, the possessors of it, with matter of thanksgiving and praise to all eternity.

IV. I am next to shew, for what reason 'tis so solemnly proclaimed by a voice from heaven, and ordered to be recorded, that *the dead are blessed that die in the Lord*. This is done,

1. To let it be known in our world, how it fares with the friends of *Jesus* in another.

2. To assure believers, that death is no bar to their happiness; but the sure, tho' awful, way to it.

3. To leave it on record to the end of time, and assure those that live in every age, that here is not their rest, and excite them to look after one remaining; that they may give up themselves to be followers of them who are gone into it, and be kept from fainting under the trials of life, that shall so soon be over, in death, and then followed with a blessedness to endure for ever.

APPLICATION.

1. Are the dead blessed that die *in the Lord*? How miserable are they that die *out of him*?

2. How dear and great are our obligations to *Jesus Christ*, who hath made the valley of the shadow of death the way to blessedness and glory?

3. How great is our advantage who hear the voice that proclaims this from heaven, *Blessed are the*
the

the dead that die in the Lord; and this as confirmed by the testimony of the spirit?

4. How much better to a believer is the day of his death, than the day of his birth; seeing he is born to *labour*, but when he dies, he goes to *rest*?

5. Are they such, and such only as die in the Lord, that shall be blessed in and with him? How seriously should you inquire, whether you belong to him, on which so much depends?

You have, here, another argument to recommend Christ to your acceptance; he will be a friend to you at death, when all others fail.

Lastly, This may help to reconcile us to the death of our believing friends, who here lived *to Christ*, died *in him*, and by dying are gone to live *with him*?

How unspeakably more happy are they in being with *Christ*, than they could be *with us*? The sorrow we feel upon account of their absence, should be relieved by the consideration of their being present with the Lord.

Why should we immoderately mourn, that their life is so soon at an end in this world, when we have reason to conclude, that they are the sooner enter'd upon their blessedness in another? One reason of our sorrow for the loss of friends, is because we loved them: but that should work another way, and lead us to be well-pleased with their felicity.

You may say, you desired to enjoy them longer; as they that are most meet for heaven, are justly the most desirable companions upon earth. Be it so: then let your sorrow be turned
into

172 *The Blessedness of them, &c.* Ser. XI.

the right channel, and weep for yourselves, but not for them.

The consideration of their being parted for a while, is not near so sad as, the hope of meeting and dwelling, for ever, with Christ and them, is, or should be, reviving. They have ended all their labours and sufferings; escaped all enemies and dangers; are past all fears and sorrows; are everlastingly delivered from the guilt and power of sin; have obtained the end of their faith and patience, their work and hope, and are triumphing with Christ and all the perfected spirits of the just, in heavenly and endless joy and glory. Let the thoughts of *this*, therefore, dry up your tears.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labour and their works follow them.

7 AP 53

The End of the FIRST PART.

T H E

PART II.

THE

Christian's Companion:

CONTAINING

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. The REDEEMER's Claim
of the Heart. | knowing his Redeemer liv-
eth. |
| II. The Blessedness of being
betimes in CHRIST. | VI. The Saints Satisfaction af-
ter Death. |
| III. The dangerous Deceitful-
ness of SIN. | VII. The Sum of CHRISTI-
ANITY. |
| IV. The Door of HOPE yet
open. | VIII. The Duty of holding
fast the Form of sound
Words. |
| V. The Believer's Triumph, | |

Being all the Sermons that were published by the
AUTHOR in his Life-Time.

JAMES I. 22.

Γίνεθε δι' ποιηταὶ λόγου, καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ, παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοὺς.



T H E
D E D I C A T I O N.

To the People of my CHARGE, the Church of
CHRIST, in *Mugwel-Street*, near *Cripple-
Gate*, LONDON.

Dearest Friends,

THE practical discourses that I have been led to publish singly, having some connexion with each other, are now collected into one volume, which I thus put into your hands, as a public acknowledgment of your endearing affection, and the best return I could make for it, as expressive of my own.

In the course of my ministry, I have endeavoured to copy after the apostle, as determining not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: And ourselves your servants for Jesus sake, 1 Cor. ii. 1.

These discourses put together, I call THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPANION, as taken up in things of common and everlasting concern, beginning where real christianity in any must begin, namely, in yielding Christ his own, the heart; and shewing where it ultimately tends, viz. to heaven, with what appeared most necessary to quicken, caution, support and comfort by the way.

From the use God has been pleased to make of the respective parts, I give them together to the world with the greater hope, that thro' his blessing, they shall be further serviceable to the common salvation, and therein to my giving up my account at last with joy. Beg it for yourselves and me, as I do for you and every reader.

I am,



your companion
to the kingdom and
patience of JESUS,

D. WILCOX.

THE
Redeemer's Claim.
A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D to a
SOCIETY of YOUNG MEN.

The DEDICATION.

To the *society* of young men, belonging to the
lecture in the Old-Jewry, London.

DEAR SIRs,

*Y*OUR desire to have the following sermon in your hands,
I am willing to take as an instance of your having yielded
to the Redeemer's Claim, therein pleaded; and that you
intend to abide by it: may it appear in the issue, that I am
not mistaken.

*In this infidel age, wherein 'tis modish to question, and run
down every thing revealed, 'twas a commendable zeal for
God, and concern for your souls, that led you to enter into so
considerable a society, to be publickly instructed in the princi-
ples of religion, that you may know the ground on which you
stand yourselves; and be able, on just occasions, to give a reason
of the hope that is in you, to others, 1 Pet. iii. 15. That you
may do this with the greater clearness and comfort, my aim
in the choice of the subject, was to let you see the necessity of
beginning your learning at the right end, or taking in that
which alone can give a value to it; namely, your choosing*

The DEDICATION.

for YOURS, and consenting without reserve to be HIS. *If this be done, my point is gain'd, and I shall only add, As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, Col. ii. 6. and thereby evidence yourselves to be his disciples indeed. Follow on to know the Lord, Hos. vi. 3. and aet up to your growing light, proving that the doctrine ysu learn from the sacred scriptures, is doctrine according to godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3. by your holding it forth in a good conversation. Thus your knowledge not leaving you barren nor unfruitful, but leading to exemplary holiness, will be truly your ornament now, and conduce at length to your abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 8, 11. I am, for his sake,*

Your Servant in the Gospel,

D. WILCOX.

PROVERBS xxiii. 26. former Part.

My Son, give me thy Heart.

TO engage and fix your attention to these words, you are to know, at the entrance, that *Jesus Christ* is the speaker.

The book is stil'd, *The proverbs of Solomon, the wisest of men*; but behold a greater than Solomon is here, Mat. xii. 42. This is the voice of * wisdom itself, of Jesus Christ, who is the

* *Wisdom* brought in speaking in this book is commonly taken for the divine λόγος, the eternal word and son of God; Mat. i. 23; now Emmanuel, God with us, i. e. God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16.

wisdom

The Redeemer's Claim.

5

wisdom of God, and to them that are called, the power of God, 1 Cor, i. 24.

When he was on *earth*, he has this testimony given him, *never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. and no wonder, for he was also the *son of God*; and now you are to hear him speaking from *heaven*, *see that ye refuse not him that speaketh*.

Your regard is demanded by the highest authority, by the *father*, to whom he stands in the most endeared relation, *this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*, Mat. xvii. 5. and 'tis at your peril if you disobey, as 'tis threatned in the *old Testament*, and repeated in the *new*, *every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*; Deut. xviii. 19. Acts iii. 22.

You are to *hear*, not for *others*, but for *yourselves*, to whom he would be conceiv'd to apply, *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men*: And in the *text* he comes down to every *individual*, as it were by name, especially to every younger person, speaking with the affection and tenderness of a *father*, *My son, give me thy heart*.

The words have the nature of a *claim* or *demand*, which where the gospel comes, our blessed Lord makes for *himself* against all pretenders whatsoever: 'Tis of the best thing we have to give, the *heart*, but yet no more than is his right.

The demand is plain and positive, upon the most just and equitable grounds, and so speaks the present indispensable duty of every one to whom 'tis directed, and the obligation they are

under to comply with it, and this with the greatest freedom as a voluntary act. God grant there may be such a power going along with what shall be here offered, that to so just a claim made by Christ, *my son, give me thy heart*, there may be the most ready answer, *Lord, my heart shalt thou have, my heart I give.*

In hope of this, my work will be to shew,

I. *What is to be understood by the heart, which Christ here claims.*

II. *What is implied in giving him the heart as our act about it.*

III. *How Christ is to be considered, to whom the gift is to be made.*

IV. *For what purposes the heart is to be given to him.*

V. *Why this is to be done by every one to whom the claim is directed, especially by such as are in their younger years.*

VI. *How as to the manner, it concerns and becomes us to do it.*

Lastly, *The Application to be made of the whole.*

I. *What is to be understood by the heart, which Christ here claims.*

Doubtless this is to be taken in the greatest latitude: Christ's claim extends to all that he hath purchased, and that is *ourselves*, soul and body, with the services of the respective powers and members of each. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; redeemed unto God, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's,* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

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The price by which the purchase was made, infinitely exceeded all the treasures of the world: *Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,* 1 Pet. i. 18, 12.

Such was Christ's love to his people, that seeing he could give no greater, he gave himself for them, and may well lay claim to the largest returns from them. When one part only is named, the other is no less included, as in the apostle's moving exhortation, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,* Rom. xii. 1. Present your bodies, not alone, but in conjunction with your spirits, as necessary to its being a reasonable service. Thus we are bid to yield ourselves to God, Rom. vi. 13. and 'tis the character of the Macedonian christians, whose charity is taken notice of to their praise, that they did so they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then to any other service demanded of them according to the will of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

When no less than this is intended, it may be fitly denoted in calling for the heart upon several accounts.

(1.) To intimate that the heart comes under the mediator's eye. He is said to know all men, when he was here tabernacling among them, John ii. 25. and that he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in him: And he is not to be conceived to know less above, now like the sun, he is exalted that he might fill all things,

and have nothing *hid from his light*, Eph. iv. 10. He is represented as having *eyes like unto a flame of fire*, Rev. ii. 18, 23. striking into, and thorow every soul, and will sooner or later prove it to universal conviction, as he declares, *all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and heart*, and this in order to a final reckoning, when *he will give to every one according to his works*.

'Tis visible to him which way every heart stands: If there be but *one* in a congregation who *draws near to him with the mouth*, and pretends to *honour him with the lips*, without being any farther solicitous, as if that was all that was required, *Jesus Christ*, the great *master of assemblies*, observes that person, and thus calls to him, to rouse him out of his mistake, *My son, give me thy heart*.

They are all mark'd by him, *who say they are Jews, Israelites indeed, when they are not, but do lye*, Rev. iii. 9. An empty profession can no more escape his notice, than skreen from his wrath.

(2.) Our Lord hereby signifies, that *where the heart is wanting, nothing else is valued or accepted by him*. You may give him the lip and knee; commend his ministers and ordinances, and diligently attend upon them; get your heads stock'd with useful knowledge, and perform your part so well in many religious duties, as to secure the good opinion and applause of men; but with *Christ*, all stands for nothing without the *heart*. He will not take with a *shadow* instead of the *substance*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Bodily exercise*, how la-
borious

borious foever, where there is no more, is neither pleasing to him, nor profitable to ourselves. He requireth *truth* in the *inward parts*; and to attempt to put him off with the *worst*, to whom the *best* is due, is only to entitle ourselves to the *deceiver's curse*, who *having in his flock a male, voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing*, Mal. i. 14. Christ's demand of the heart, does not tell us that he looks for nothing else, nothing besides; but is to be heard as a solemn warning to this sound: *Make heart-work of every thing wherein thou hast to do with heaven.*

(3.) *None is reckoned to give himself to Christ, or any thing else in truth, who withhold his heart.* 'Tis all pretence, whatever is done without this. The *heart* is the man; and if this be not yielded to your *rightful Lord*, with what confidence soever you may call yourselves servants, you are known to belong to another *master*, and who that is you may tremble to think; the *Lord of glory*, and the prince of darkness, dividing all the world.

Whatever is given to Christ *without the heart*, is given in a *manner* unworthy of his acceptance: Upon this foot, the most forward professions of devotedness to him, are like to prove as vanishing as the *morning cloud*; as little durable as the *early dew*: The fairest promises may soon be forgotten, or retracted as easily as made; and after the utmost yielded to him, much more is denied him, and given to his Enemy: From all which, they may well be said, not to have given him *themselves*, or any thing at all *in effect*, who keep back their *hearts*.

(4.) *Where*

(4.) *Where Christ has the heart, nothing will be deny'd him that he calls for. This therefore is only mention'd, as drawing after it all the rest. The head and hand, our parts and powers, time and strength, substance and interest, whatever we are, and have, and can do, will be all under the direction, and at the command of Christ, if he has the heart. There is no need of a distinct demand of every thing to which he has a right; the gaining of the heart will be the best and only valuable security of the whole. This therefore is thus insisted on, My son, give me thy heart.*

II. *What is implied in giving the heart to Christ as our act about it, that which we are here called to.*

That this may lie the more plain before you, let me briefly premise a few things.

1. *We are to be considered as a race of apostate creatures, having broken the law of our Creator and King, and so are become both guilty and vile before him; by nature children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3.*

2. *How little soever it could be expected, God has so far pitied us under the ruins of the fall, as to find out a way for our being restor'd: appointing his own son, as mediator, to interpose between himself and us, and in our nature, to do and suffer whatever was necessary to his becoming an all-sufficient Saviour. This on the part of our recovering head was readily agreed to, and fully accomplish'd, and so he is enter'd upon his office and work, every way perfect and qualified for it.*

3. *All intercourse between God and man is now to be carried on through this mediator, our Lord*
Jesus

The Redeemer's Claim.

II

Jesus Christ. By him, and only by him, will the majesty of heaven, against whom we have sinned, make any approaches in a way of grace to us; and he is our only way to the father, the great days-man that is to go between, and lay his hand upon us both, Job x. 33. Thus a saving design is set on foot, and Jesus Christ plac'd at the head of it: our world is peculiarly under his government, and the whole creation subjected to him, for the ends of redemption, to carry up many sons from hence to glory.

4. *We are hereupon to conceive ourselves in a state of hope:* creatures about whom the great and blessed God is graciously concern'd; really unwilling that we should perish in our distance from him, and therefore has sent his son to bring us back, and be our way, and treat with us in order to mutual reconciliation and peace.

5. *The saving benefits which Christ hath purchased, are only to be ours as united to him.* They are to be in him, who according to the gospel, can be saved by him. If we are not his members, Christ only heard of, after all he has done and suffer'd, will avail us nothing, stand us in no stead.

6. *Our own choice of Christ is absolutely necessary to a special relation to him, and so to our passing into a state of salvation.* He will be a saviour to none that will not take him for such, and consent to be his saved ones.

He did not stay for our consent before he undertook our redemption, and, in pursuit of that undertaking, assumed our nature; died on the cross a propitiation for sin; rose again for our justification; ascended to heaven, and there sits

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at the right hand of God, as a *priest upon his throne*, made *perfect through suffering*, to be the *author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him*, Heb. v. 8, 9. Thus in point of atonement and merit, or preparation by both, Christ hath *finished his work*, without standing to enquire whether we were willing, or not : and now, in the gospel, the fruits of all, together with himself, are sent and freely tender'd to us ; but as to actual interest in his person and purchase, this no one at years, and of the use of reason, is capable of, without his own acceptance. The blessed design is far advanc'd, and the prospect before us encouraging and hopeful ; but as rational creatures, that are to be dealt with according to our choice, we are to come into it, if with us it go on and issue well.

Having thus prepar'd the way by stating our case, the *giving* Christ the *heart*, as that which is here enjoin'd, carries in it such things as these :

(1.) A renouncing whatever has hitherto claim'd the heart, and kept it from Christ,

In point of { subjection and love,
 { dependance and trust.

[1.] *A disowning of all other lords and loves that would rival it with Christ.* The *world and flesh*, as *Satan's* baits, distinctly cry, *give me thy heart* : and how unworthy soever, horrid to think ! they are herein gratified by all in their natural, unrenewed state. Renouncing these is therefore the first step in rendring the heart where it belongs : denying their pretensions as utterly to be abhor'd : breaking from under their power as all usurpation,

tion, with a resolution to endure it no longer, submit to it no more.

Christ will have the throne, and be uppermost in every soul he saves; and if we ever expect to be saved by him, his terms are known: *Other lords besides him that have had dominion over us*, Isa. xxvi. 13. must be discarded; other things that have been loved before him, must be rejected: whatever possesses his place in his heart to the keeping him out, is to be pluck'd from thence with a holy indignation, venting itself in some such language as *Ephraim's*, *What have I any more to do with idols?* Hos. xiv. 8. *Get ye hence* to make room for Christ.

[2.] *A coming off from all other dependances and trusts that would be to us in Christ's stead.* When the awak'd sinner is enquiring with solitude, *where-withal shall I come before the Lord?* Mic. vi. 6. What shall I plead with him in order to acceptance? And *one thing* steps forth and cries, *plead me; another, rely on me*; thy good meanings, thy good works, thy virtues, thy duties, thy sufferings, thy own merits resulting from any of these, or the supply thou may'st have out of the church's stock, &c. to give an answer to all, viz. *The bed is too short to rest upon, the covering too narrow to wrap ones self in*, Isa. xxviii. 20. to build here is to trust to lying words; none but Christ, none but Christ.

(2.) *Closing in with the design in which he is engag'd, as the Redeemer and Saviour of lost sinners*: assenting to the report made of him; embracing the offers made by him, in the method settled, upon the terms laid down: approving the
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14 *The Redeemer's Claim.*

the whole contrivance of laying our help upon him, as most *worthy of God*, and of all *acceptation* among men; and this not only in *general*, but as brought down to *me*: looking upon him with a pleasant eye, under the character and *offices* he bears; and bidding him welcome in the *errand*, and to all the work, which, as the *sent of God*, he comes about. In a word, when Christ proclaims, *Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. iii. 20. with a consenting soul to say, *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?* Gen. xxiv. 31.

Giving Christ the *heart*, is giving him the best entertainment, as one we are most pleased with; reckon ourselves most happy in; and so is the same with what is elsewhere call'd, *receiving Christ Jesus the Lord*, one expression of *believing in him*. *As many as received him, to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*, John i. 12.

(3.) *Acknowledging the justice of his claim in the right of redemption, and taking it to ourselves, under the constraints of love, a resigning ourselves up to him as his own; to be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, &c.* Jer. xiii. 11. *that in us he may see of the travel of his soul, and be satisfied.*

He has a *grant* from the Father, of a *seed to serve him, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation*, Psal. xxii. 30. *That making his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and have the*

the

the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand, Isa. liii. 10. The prospect of the coming in of these, was part of the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, Heb. xii. 2. in the way to his entering into glory, there to wait the effects, and reap the fruits of all, in having the hearts of his people, to whom he is a designed head; and the necks of his enemies who reject his rule: now in giving Christ the heart, we on our part seal the grant the father has made him in consideration of his death, and in fact put into his hand, by an act and deed of our own, what was his before in right, and he had the strongest reason to expect. Thus it is the same with that coming to him, of which we find him speaking with a pleased confidence, All that the father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.

Our giving Christ the heart, is not to be mistaken as conferring upon him any thing that did not before belong to him as his due. 'Tis such a gift as is properly a surrender of what we have no right to detain from him, or bestow any where else. And in making this, we harmonize with heaven; avouch him to be our head, whom the father chose and ordained to be so; and come into the number of his believing members, every one yielding up himself with this sense of soul, Lord! save me, I am thine, Psal. cxix. 24. and of my salvation bear the glory.

(4.) *Confiding in him with satisfaction, upon the warrant of the gospel, as able and faithful to fulfil in us, and to us, whatever he has undertaken and promised to compleat our Salvation.*

The

The *chosen* of God are given the Redeemer as a *charge* that are to be called another day. The father knows him equal to the trust, and fully rests in him as one in whom he shall not be disappointed. Answerably to this, the believer throws himself upon him, thro' all the objections and discouragements that may be cast in his way, being led of God into a saving acquaintance with him, and *persuaded that he is able to keep what he commits unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i. 12.

As an encouragement to this, Christ declares, *I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me; and this is the Father's will that sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up again the last day*, John vi. 38, 39. Hereupon, to repose a confidence in him, to make good his word; to rely upon his grace and care, to fill his character, and satisfy our hope, must be taken as included in *giving him the heart*: and such a *confidence* in Christ will never leave the depending soul ashamed, but issue in a glorious recompence of reward. Hence I go on to shew--

III. *How Christ is to be consider'd as here demanding the heart, and to whom 'tis to be given up in the latitude mention'd.*

In general in the affair before us, he is to be regarded as *mediator* between God and man, with all the *properties* that belong to him as such, and recommend him to our affectionate choice; as that he is most *suitable, authorized, merciful and faithful*, the *only, all-sufficient*, most excellent one. Distinctly--

(1.) *As our prophet and teacher* : one whom the Lord our God promised to raise up, and in the fittest season actually sent, to acquaint lost sinners with his mind and will concerning their salvation. *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, Heb. i. 1. He came forth from the father, and came into the world* to make him known to such as were running from him, and from their own happiness, and shew them the way back.

And tho' he is now return'd to heaven, he continues still in the same office, the supream pastor and teacher of his church ; by his word, and ministers, and spirit, to instruct his people in what they are most concerned to know, *viz.* how to escape the wrath of God, recover his image and favour, please and be accepted of him here, and obtain everlasting life and glory.

He is a most powerful, effectual, unerring teacher ; one that can make us know *truth in the inward parts, and seal instruction to the heart* ; is incapable of being mistaken himself, and can never deceive or mislead others : none that give up themselves to his teaching and guidance, shall ever miscarry.

(2.) *As our great high-priest* ; who, according to the appointment and call of the father, took that *office and honour*, Heb. v. 4. and *through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God*, Heb. ix. 14. an offering and a sacrifice most pleasing to him, Eph. v. 2. as the satisfaction he requir'd ; and available for us to redeem us from deserved wrath, and purchase all the blessings we need : and having finished his *oblation*

on the cross, he has *carried his blood within the veil*, where, as the other part of his office, he *ever liveth to make intercession*, and so is able to *save to the utmost, all that come unto God by him*.

(3.) *As our Lord and King*, who has a right to rule us, and is fitted for it, and whose government is to serve the kindest designs, with reference to all that come under it, as all his people shall sooner or later do.

It pleased the father, that in him should all fulness dwell, Col. i. 19. and he is *head over all things to his church*, Eph. i. 22. for protection and influence; has *all power in heaven and earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. over all flesh and spirits too, *to give eternal life to as many as are given him*, John xvii. 2. and furnish all things necessary to make it sure.

We can have no want but he is able to supply, no burden but he can take off, no disease but he is sufficient to heal, no enemy but he can restrain and conquer, no complaint but he can silence, by removing the ground of it; no regular desire sent up in prayer to heaven, but he can and will answer, and at last out-do, in the happiness he will bring all his to enjoy *there*. In this *quality* the Redeemer stands, when making the demand, *my son, give me thy heart*; in this light he is to be viewed, as we are to make the surrender to him. And this will assist us in our answer to the next enquiry, *viz.*

IV. *For what purposes the heart is to be given Christ?*

And here I shall mingle *duty* and *privilege* together, both which are to come into our aim
and

and design; as 'tis for the glory of God, the honour of Christ, as well as our own advantage and happiness, that we are requir'd to yield to the Mediator's claim.

In general, Jesus Christ is to have the heart to do the whole of his work upon it; to attemper and fit it to the business 'tis to be employ'd in, and the blessings and blessedness 'tis gradually designed for. Particularly,

(1.) *As dark and ignorant we are to yield ourselves to Christ, to be enlightned by him; made teachable, and admitted into his school, there in a becoming manner, by the helps vouchsafed, to learn of him.*

Christ's office is to teach; and none can do this like him. He can unlock the *sealed book*, and open the *blind eye*; *destroy the face of the covering*, and *take away the vail we are naturally under*, Isa. xxv. 7. and shine into the darkest soul, revealing God and the things of God, in a manner in which they were *unknown* before, and will always remain so to any other. 'Tis for this he bids us to *learn of him*, Mat. xi. 28. and accordingly for this the heart is to be given to him, breathing to this sense; "O thou, who didst *command the light to shine out of darkness*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. visit this dungeon with a saving ray; "say, *let there be light*, Gen. i. 3. and *the day shall dawn*, the *day-star arise* within, 2 Pet. i. 19. and the *shadow of death be turned into the morning*, Amos vi. 8.

"How many soever are my *other helps*, for acquaintance with the *things of my peace*, Luke xix. 42. O let me not want thy *spirit*, with-

“ out which I may be ever learning, and never
 “ able to come to the saving knowledge of the truth,
 “ 2 Tim. iii. 7. Ministerial instruction is a pri-
 “ vilege that I desire to be unfeignedly thankful
 “ for ; that I have line upon line, precept upon
 “ precept, Isa. xxviii. 10. and would not be
 “ weary waiting at wisdoms gates, Prov. viii. 34.
 “ to take in light ; but O do thou animate all,
 “ who alone *teachest to profit*, Isa. xlviii. 17. I
 “ yield myself to thee to that end, and what-
 “ ever thou art pleased to communicate, I would
 “ no more allow myself to reject or dispute ;
 “ *Speak, Lord, for thy servant beareth*, 1 Sam.
 “ iii. 10.

(2.) We are to give ourselves to Christ as
guilty, to be pardoned and justified, and so delivered
from the wrath of God, and restored to his favour,
in which life does stand.

As a ground and encouragement to this, we
 are assured, that when *we all like sheep had gone*
astray, turning every one to his own way, the Lord
laid upon him the iniquity of us all, that he was
wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our
iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him,
that with his stripes we might be healed. Isa. liii. 6.

As to the way of application ; *To him give all*
the prophets witness, that thro' his name, who so-
ever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins,
 Acts x. 43. *Him hath God set forth to be a pro-*
pitiation, thro' faith in his blood, to declare his
righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifi-
er of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25.
His blood cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. and
 in this fountain open'd for returning sinners,

the

the soul that is washed is safe, *Zach. xiii. 1.* discharged from going down into the pit, there being a ransom found, *Job xxxiii. 24.* and no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, *Rom. viii.*

1. *He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin, in making reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24.* and hence his blood speaking better things than the blood of Abel, *Heb. xii. 24.* cries to heaven, to him by whose determinate counsel it was shed, not for vengeance, but for mercy : *O! forgive, forgive the soul that comes in to receive the atonement, and let not his trespasses be imputed to him ; whatever he has done against thee, place it all upon my account, and bid him go free.*

Whatever we deserv'd, or were liable to, in Christ we have redemption, thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sin, *Eph. i. 7.* which is to be preach'd in his name among all nations, *Luke xxiv. 47.* and being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, *Rom. v. 1.* He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, *Rom. iv. 25.* and believers, as such, have an interest in both, which furnishes an answer to every challenge, and, as to eternity, leaves them nothing to fear. *Who shall condemn? who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? when it is God that justifieth, when it is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; taken from prison, and from judgment, Rom. viii. 33, 34.* in token that the debt he took upon him is paid, and compleat satisfaction made. In the fruits of that satisfaction, there is reason to call his members *blessed now*, as in the most desirable state of any upon earth. Their guilt is done away in their

Redeemer's blood, and so they are freed from hell and wrath : their spots are covered in the *everlasting righteousness* which he hath brought in, and so they are beheld with complacency by their reconciled father, and may with a holy confidence draw nigh to him, being *made accepted in the beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace*, Eph. i. 6.

'Tis the design of the Gospel, at once to reveal a *city of refuge*, and the way cast up that leads to it ; and then cry to us, as pursued by the *avenger of blood, turn into your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope*, Zach. ix. 12. Do not sit still or sink, but *flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you*, and all shall be well, Heb. vi. 18.

Upon this ground, the convinced sinner, *drawn by the cords of love*, Hof. xi. 4. betakes himself to Christ for pardon and peace ; with inward solicitude and concern, thus opening his case to him, " O thou compassionate redeemer
 " and lover of souls, vouchsafe to look upon me
 " with a gracious eye. My *sins have separated*
 " *between God and my soul*, Isa. lix. 2. and laid
 " me open to his wrath, under the apprehensions
 " of which I am afraid to live, and dare not
 " die. I have destroyed myself, but am assured
 " in the *word of truth*, Hof. xiii. ix. that on thee
 " the *help* of such is *laid*, Psal. lxxxix. 19. and
 " how far gone soever, I would not dishonour
 " thee by *despair*, as if thine arm was wither'd,
 " or thy blood dried up, or there was *no help for*
 " *me*, no not in God, Psal. iii. 2.

" Too long have I stood off from thee, never
 " till now discerning thy worth, or my own
 wretch-

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"wretchedness, as involv'd in guilt and death
" *Being ignorant of God's righteousness*, or too
"proud to submit to it, I have vainly gone about
" *to establish a righteousness of my own*, Rom. x. 3.
"tho' all the while compassing my self about with
" *sparks of my own kindling*, Isa. l. 11, they could
"only serve to light me to destruction, and
"would at last have left me under it; as nothing
"else could be expected *at thy hand*, but to be bid
" *lie down in sorrow*. I at length see my pro-
"voking mistake, and deeply bewail it, repent-
"ing before thee in dust and ashes: and now,
"laden with guilt, and liable to justice, afraid,
"and in danger of *everlasting burnings*, I betake
"myself to thee, to be delivered from all, and
"obtain salvation with eternal glory.

"The covering of *fig-leaves*, I have foolishly
"endeavour'd to patch together, instead of hid-
"ing my nakedness, does but shew it the more,
"and leave me the more exposed to revenging
"wrath. My *righteousnesses* are all as an *un-*
" *clean thing*, Isa. lxiv. 6. as *filthy rags*, in which
"I dare not appear, without any thing else to
"plead, at the bar of a just and holy God. Mine
" *iniquities are gone up over my head, and cry a-*
" *loud for vengeance to be pour'd down upon it.*
"Psal. xxxviii. 4. As an *heavy burthen*, they are
" *too heavy for me*, and 'tis not in the Power of
"any creature to take it off. Death and judg-
"ment are before me, for which I am utterly
"unprepared. Guilt bids me expect all that is
"dreadful, against which I have no defence or
"guard." In this case, blessed Jesus! I flee to
thy arms, I throw myself at thy feet: O take

me into thy protection, and keep me safe ; hide me in thy wounds, and *spread thy skirt* over me, that my *sins* when *search'd after*, may not be *found* ; and that my *person*, when *called for*, may be *accepted*. As guilty and perishing, nothing else can give me relief, and this will effectually do it. From whom, or whatsoever others may expect their help, *my hope, O Lord, is in thee. I count all things but loss, in comparison of thee, that I may be found in thee*, Phil. iii. Oppose what thou hast done and suffer'd, to the charges of the law and justice, and bring me off. *Take away my filthy garments, and give me change of raiment*, Zach. iii. 4. and thus cloath'd with the *garments of salvation*, and covered with the *robe of righteousness*, after the deepest sorrow upon the account of sin, *my soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God my saviour*, Luke i. 46, 47.

(3.) *The heart, as polluted, is to be given to Christ to be purified, and new made.*

This is necessary, that the *covenant of grace* may be *mutual*, and is our entrance into it. Where God declares, as the tenor and sum of that covenant, *ye shall be my people, and I will be your God*, Jer. xxxii. 39. we read in the *context*, either before or after, of something to be done upon the *heart* : and the change which it is to pass under, is not to be conceiv'd of as inconsiderable and slight, what any body might be the author of ; but such as calls for an *almighty power*, and speaks the agent *God*. 'Tis represented as a *renovation* : *a new heart will I give you*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 28. which denotes the greatness of
the

the disorder which we are by nature under, and the hand and grace requisite to the extensive cure. And as this is promised in the new covenant, the mediator of it is to see to the accomplishment, and preside in this, as well as in all other parts of our recovery.

The dispensation of grace, set on foot through Christ, respects us under a *double notion*, viz.

As $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Malefactors} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{Patients.} \end{array} \right.$

1. As *malefactors*; who have forfeited our lives, by our rebellion against God, and are under sentence of death, from his broken law, and so liable to be cut off by the hand of *justice*. Without *remission*, we must needs die, Heb. ix. 22. and *without blood, there is no remission*, Heb. x. 4. and the *blood of bulls and goats* could never avail to this, nor any other, but that of *Jesus Christ*. This is *the lamb of God, that taketh away the sons of the world*, John i. 29. When other sacrifices would not do, *he came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. In order to it, a *body is prepared* him, wherein to suffer and die; and by the *shedding* of his blood, as of infinite value, atonement is made, and declared to be accepted, in his being *raised from the dead*, and received to *heaven*, and his *continuance*, and highest exaltation *there*; being *in the midst of the throne*, as *the lamb* that has been slain. As *guilty*, the remedy we need is *pardon*; and in *Jesus Christ*, we have *redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*, Col. i. 14. But remission is not all we want,

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or are encouraged to expect: *The grace of God that bringeth salvation*, moreover regards us.

As *patients*, and provides for our relief. Upon our revolt from God, we not only brought ourselves under a *doom to die*, but contracted a *mortal disease*, by the loss of his image, and the *corruption* that succeeded, under which we are languishing and pining away, and unless we are healed, cannot live, *Ezek. xxxiii. 10. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint*, the blood vitiated, the constitution broken, *Isa. i. 5, 6.* and in so sad a case, how little would it signify to have a *pardon*, if we were left to die of our disease?

But thro' the riches of grace, we are not so left. A remedy is provided, answerable to both parts of our misery. We need a saviour to restore us to *health*, in recovering us to a *divine nature*, as well as to make our *peace with God*, and reinstate us in the *divine favour*; and Christ is qualified and appointed for *both*; exalted to give *repentance* to Israel, and *remission* of sins. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Acts v. 31.*

By dying he hath purchased the grace necessary to an universal change, and is impower'd and ready to bestow it. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17.* and by making them *such*, he draws his people *into fellowship with him*; and hence, as *both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*, he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, *Heb. ii. 11.* To all his members, by the father's appointment,

he

he is made *sanctification* as well as *righteousness*, 1 Cor. i. 30. that they may be *compleat in him*, wanting nothing. The spirit of grace, is the spirit of Christ, the great agent he employs in purifying the hearts of his people; and for this they are to be delivered to him, that *all old things may be done away, and all things made new.*

The cure is great, and would be impossible to any *other*; but is not beyond *his* power and design. He proclaims from his throne, *behold, I make all things new*, Rev. xxi. 5. and to this the believer eccho's, in yielding himself to him, *Lord! be it unto me according to thy word; make all things new in me.*

The heart, as *throughout corrupt*, is to be resigned to Christ, to be healed; particularly as to the *several forms* according to which that corruption chiefly works, call'd *the plague of every man's own heart*. With a special regard to *this*, in making the surrender, one and another may clap his hand upon his breast, and say, "Lord, "I bring to thee this *stony* heart, to be *softened*, "and turned into a *heart of flesh*; this *earthly* "sensual heart, to be made *spiritual* and *heavenly*, and raised to things above; this *divided* "heart, to be *united*; this *unstable* heart, *fixt*; "this *vain* heart, to be made *serious*; this *proud* "heart, *humble*; this *dead* heart, *quickned*, and "disposed to what is good, and enlarged in it: "these are but part of its disorders, the *detail* is "endless. I now put into thy hands, a heart in "the saddest manner marr'd by sin, to be form'd "after thy own heart, and made such as thou "wouldst have it to be.

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" 'Tis owing to thy gracious interposition,
 " that I am not taken out of a state of hope, and
 " sealed up under that awful sentence, *let him*
 " *that is filthy be filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. 'Tis
 " an addition to the *mercy*, that I have been so
 " far made to see my vileness, as to be weary of
 " it, truly to loath it, and myself upon the ac-
 " count of it, and desire to come under thy heal-
 " ing hand. I would take encouragement from
 " hence, to apply to thee, for all that grace
 " which I further need. O deny not desires that
 " are of thy own raising, nor let me be rejected who
 " have no where else to go. I am shut up to
 " thee as the *only physician* in both worlds, from
 " whom I can expect relief. Without thy help
 " I die, but under thy care, how far gone so-
 " ever, I am safe. *Lord, if thou wilt thou can'st*
 " *make me clean*, Mat. viii. 2, 3. let me hear
 " from thy mouth that reviving word, *I will, be*
 " *thou clean*; and the sadder my case, the more
 " will the cure redound to thy praise.

(4.) *As probationers for eternity, we are to give ourselves to Christ,*

To be { *strengthened*
 and
 kept.

[1.] *To be strengthened to what is required of us,*
or may be appointed to us, in our way to an endless
state. A christian's life, preparatory to this, is
 a life of labour; hence compared to a *race* and
warfare; and accordingly our work is set forth
 by *running, striving, wrestling, fighting*; words
 that import the utmost struggle, as no more than
 necessary to gain the prize, secure the victory.

We

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We are born at a distance from God, unlike to him ; and if we are brought by renewing grace, through the *strait gate*, into the *narrow way* that leads to life, we are not to sit still as if this were the place of our rest. We have many duties to discharge, rooted corruptions to mortify, powerful temptations to resist, various afflictions to bear or expect, imperfect graces to improve, a constant watch to maintain : in a word, we are to carry it *like persons waiting for our Lord*, Luke xii. 36. *having our conversation as becomes the gospel*, Phil. i. 27. making the glory of God our end, and his word our rule ; and in such a course of well-doing, to hold on with *patience* and *perseverance* to the death, it being such only that can hope for the crown of life : and as we are to act in all under the eye of God, and must give an account to him, *who is sufficient for these things ? all our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. derived to us through Jesus Christ, *without whom we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. To him therefore the heart is to be yielded, out of weakness to be made strong ; furnished for the work he lays before us, assisted in it, held close to it, and enabled to persevere, in opposition to unfaithfulness and fainting, so as to finish well, and *give up our account at last with joy*. Lord, thus give strength to obey, and then command what thou wilt !

Our need of *this* is obvious, and 'tis equally plain, our *help* here also is laid upon one that is *mighty*. The *grace of Christ is sufficient* for us, *his strength is made perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. The apostle knew upon what ground he
spake

spake for himself, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. and bids others *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, Eph. vi. 10. Surely shall one say, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, and in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Thus, as upon our trial, we are to yield ourselves to Christ, *to be strengthen'd*.

[2.] *To be kept*. Our way to heaven is dangerous as well as difficult; full of snares and beset with enemies, who desire, and by all possible methods will endeavour, our ruin. *We wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the powers of darkness*, Eph. vi. 12. and this about the highest prize, the heavenly glory, that we may not miss of it; and for retaining our integrity, grace in the principle and exercise, which is our meetness and disposition for it.

The world thro' which we are to pass is an *evil world*, Gal. i. 4. as many ways opposite to grace, and ministering to sin. *Our adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, continually goeth about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. and has *wiles and fiery darts*, to use to that end. A *deceitful heart* is ready to betray us, and the danger increases from the *flesh and senses*, as *inlets* to temptation, and *out-lets* to corruption; by which what numbers are overcome! The command makes it every one's duty, *to keep his heart with all diligence, as out of it are the issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. But who sees not, that if left to ourselves, without a better keeper, we are lost?

Well,

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Well, it ought to be good news to us, that we read it among the *Redeemer's titles*, that he is the *captain of our salvation*, Heb. ii. 10. which implies his being a *guide* and *guardian* to his people till they reach it; one that will secure them of the full possession. Whilst on earth, the safety of those that were given him was his constant care; and from his dying prayer for 'em, that during their stay *in the world*, they might be *kept from the evil*, John xvii. we may be satisfied he has carried with him the same temper to heaven, and will not rest till he see them all safe there. He wants no power to that end, nor love to render him most ready to imploy it. He speaks it as a thing certain, for the encouragement of all that consent to follow him. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*, John x. 28. He can preserve us by *internal influence*, or by his watchful *providence*; sending new succours to grace within, or breaking the force of opposition without, and will so proportion the trial to our strength, or our strength to the trial, that as our *day is*, our *help shall be*, Deut. xxxiii. 25.

He knows all his *flock* with the wisdom and tenderness of a *shepherd*, and bids 'em *not to fear*, it being *the father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. And as he is appointed to lead them thither, he will see to it, that none belonging to his charge miscarry, by any thing that may befall them by the way.

All their *times* are in the hand of their heavenly *father*, Psal. xxxi. 15. in whom their
power-

powerful advocate now with him hath a never-failing interest ; so that a tender *pity*, like that which a *father* bears to his *children*, Psal. ciii. 13. shall reign and run through all his dealings with them. Whenever he *debates* in a way of afflictive exercise, it shall always be *in measure*, staying his rough wind in the day of his east wind, Isa. xxvii. 8. lest the *spirit* should fail before him, and the *souls* which he hath made, Isa. lvii. 16. And against any thing that may threaten 'em from any other quarter, they may be assured of his constant and effectual care for their preservation. There's no occasion for any that has sincerely embark'd with Christ, to take up the language of *despair*, saying, *I shall one day perish*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. by the hands of my spiritual enemies, or give way to the gloom and horror it imports. The gospel breathes another air, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13. And this, as well as every other *promise*, stands firm in Christ ; is sealed in his blood, and shall be made good by his agency, as *all in all*, both with God for us, and from God to us.

'Tis plain then, the matter is so order'd by the wisdom that laid the scheme of our salvation, that tho' we are no match, in our own *strength*, for the opposition to be expected in our way to heaven, we have never the more reason to be dejected : tho' we are as unable by our own *skill*, to get clear of the snares that would betray us to destruction, we have nevertheless encouragement to hope ; while at the same time we are directed

to

to one, in *whose* hand we are safer from all we may fear, and for all that we can desire, than in our own. Way is thus made for the provided Redeemer to come in to our aid with the greater glory, as our preservation must be entirely plac'd to the account of his grace. As subservient to this, the apostle speaks of *glorying in his infirmities*, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. And thus it is that the *seeming contradiction* becomes a *real truth*, when we are weak, then are we strong, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. When most weak, we are most dependant, and hereby going out of ourselves to Christ, his strength which is *omnipotence*, becomes the believer's to all the purposes of his safety and happiness. And till the *King immortal* dye, 1 Tim. i. 17. and the *Lord of glory*, prove unfaithful, 1 Cor. ii. 8. or faint, no such shall be dropt or pluckt out of his hand.

This is our advantage by the covenant of grace above that of *Adam* in innocence. We are not left to stand in our own strength, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5. The believer may hence sing, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* Psal. xxvii. 1. As travelling in a foreign land, through an enemy's country, whatever combinations may be form'd against us, 'tis enough to our support, that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4. Animated by this, the apostle puts the challenge round thro' universal nature, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Rom. viii. 35. The things that are most threatening and formidable to Flesh and Blood, he particularly mentions, such as *tribulation* and *distress*, *persecution* and *famine*, *peril*, *nakedness* and *sword*; and then breaks forth in triumph over all the terrors carried in them; nay, *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*. And as if he could not enough magnify the redeemer's grace, and the believer's safety, he adds his settled persuasion upon the largest enumeration possible, that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

This now is he in whom we are to trust: our leader, who has the *name of God in him*, Exod. xxiii. 21. as it stands for all the divine perfections, which how terrible soever to disobedient sinners, speaks him the hope of his people in all generations; their *strong tower*, Prov. xviii. 10. to which they may at all times run, and be safe and quiet from fear of evil, Prov. i. 33. their *souls dwelling at ease*, Psal. xxv. 13. *stayed upon the Lord their God*, Isa. l. 10. To him we are to render ourselves to be kept according to our need; to be kept upright, notwithstanding our imperfection and frailty; to be kept safe, amidst our dangers and fears. David's language herein may be that of every believer, *Lord, be surety for thy servant for good*, Psal. cxix. 122. and let me not miscarry in the way to eternity. In doing this, we may be satisfied we don't lean on a *broken reed*, or venture ourselves with an insufficient hand.

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(5.) *As expectants of heaven, and of our final happiness there, in knowing and loving God, and being beloved by him, and enjoying the richest communications of his love in glory for ever, we are to give ourselves to Christ by perfecting grace to fit us for this, and at last to receive us to it.*

We were made for God, ultimately to seek and find our felicity in him. 'Twas the evil of sin, that it not only forfeited this, but unfitted us for it, by robbing us of his image, and introducing a dissimilitude, and so a strangeness and distance between us. The Saviour then we need, is one to remove this distance in all its causes, and in whom, as the centre of union, a *reconciled God* and *recovered souls*, may meet, with the highest well-pleasedness on both sides, and everlasting love, and delight, and rest, and rejoice in each other.

This now is the design Christ travels in, and gradually leads on. *He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,* 1 Pet. iii. 18. His death laid a foundation for this, by atoning the divine displeasure, and preparing an honourable way for mercy to open its bowels.

bowels, and pour out itself, in pardon, grace, and glory, upon those to whom the severest wrath was due.

Upon this ground he comes forth in the gospel, and as it were drawing aside the *vail* from before the *Holy of Holies*, the heavenly and *most excellent glory*, discovers the father on a *throne of grace*, with a *rainbow about it*, an emblem of peace; represents him most lovely and loving, willing and desirous of sinners salvation; with expanded arms, and *good will* in his heart and looks, inviting them to himself *as a forgiving God*; promising thro' his son to receive and bless them here, and be their portion for ever, without exception to any, who, in obedience to his call, and upon the encouragement of his promise, will make trial and come.

In this light perishing sinners are bid to look to heaven, and whilst they do so, the compassionate Jesus in pursuit of his saving design, by his spirit touches the hearts of his people, and kindly melts down their enmity against the father of mercies; rescues them from their hard and horrid thoughts of him; and not only so, but under the powerful displays and impressions of his loveliness and love, kindling in them a sacred correspondent affection, he leads them vitally and voluntarily to yield themselves to God, perfectly to please and be conformed to him as their *sovereign Lord*; perfectly to love and be pleased in him as their *supream good*, each one saying of God, as he also does of the resigning soul, *this is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it*, Psal. cxxxii. 14.

Every

Every saint, in coming into the number, thus fixes on God as infinitely preferable to all the world; *short* of whom, like *Noah's* dove out of the *ark*, while the waters cover all the earth, he can find no object or place in which to rest, and *beyond* him nothing remains to be desired. Upon a deliberate survey of the whole creation, his heart runs into the *Psalmist's* words, as denoting the firmness wherewith he quits it all for God; *whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, Psal lxxiii. 25.

The season of the solemn transaction is called *the time of love*, Ezek. xvi. 8. God in Christ appears most *amiable to his people*; and they, by the renewing work of the Holy Ghost within them, and the Redeemer's righteousness put upon them, are also *lovely* in the sight of God; beheld by him with a favour peculiar to his own, and inspired with a sincere and superlative love to him; and thus in the exercise and relishes, the flowings and reflowings of spiritual, divine and mutual love between God and his people, their happiness is begun.

But yet 'tis but begun. The people of God are called *the generation of them that seek him*, Psal. xxiv. 6. which at once speaks their present distance from him, where it is that their rest lies, and that they are in motion towards it, *not having yet attained*, Phil. iii. 12. *Whilst at home in the body, we know by feeling, we are absent from the Lord, and are to walk by faith, not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7. Who among the children of God in the present world, will or can say, that as to grace and peace, holiness and joy, he has all

that he desires? As to acquaintance with God, and the strength and exercise of love to him, and the tastes and blissful tokens of his love, and delight and satisfaction in all, he hath no more to ask, 'tis throughout with him as he could wish? Instead of this, how common and hearty are their complaints upon spiritual accounts? As far short of that *perfect conformity* to God, *Phil. iii. 14.* which is the *mark* they are aiming at; and so of that *perfect blessedness* in the sight and enjoyment of him, that is the *prize* they are running for, according to the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

They that are *savingly enlightened*, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* are ready to own, they *know but in part*, and have a great deal of darkness yet upon their minds: they that are *truly sanctified*, are sensible they are not *wholly free* from corruption, the remains of which cleave to their natures: their likeness to God is hereupon imperfect; their love to him, tho' greater than to any thing else in the world, is still too weak; after their *entering into covenant* with him, whereby they *become the Lords*, they too offend him, and so forfeit, and are often depriv'd of the sense of his favour, abridged in the comfortable manifestations of his presence and grace, and left to go mourning many days. Sad experience proves this. And even in the brightest and best circumstances with the children of God; when their heavenly father most freely indulges, and lets out himself unto them, he still remembers they are in a *state of frailty* and *trial*, and deals with them according to it; as he knows they are able to bear, or fit

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to receive, and so as, with the highest vouchsafements, to leave them under a conviction of the truth of what he declares in his word, *viz.* That *this is not their rest*, Mic. ii. 10.

Earth, at best, will not be heaven ; nor are the joys of paradise to be expected in a wilderness. There is, and ought to be a difference between the *way* and the *end* ; between *travellers* and *passengers*, and such as are *at home* in their own country, in their *father's house*. *This is not your rest*, nor can it be, because it is *polluted*. Sin has set this world at so great a distance from God, and rendered it so disagreeable to him, that all whom he designs to make happy in himself, he will have *out of it*, into a fitter state.

In a *sense* indeed, such is God's love to his people, he is pleased to *come down* to them *now*, having a way wherein to *manifest himself unto them*, *so as not unto the world*, John xiv. 22, 23. This is a great privilege, which they have reason to entertain with thankfulness. But their chief happiness will begin with their being *taken up to him*, separated from sin and sinners, and plac'd about the throne ; and for this they are to wait. 'Tis a truth, tho' a most astonishing one, and hence propos'd by way of interrogation, with an air of adoring wonder, *will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?* 2 Chron. vi. 18. On a spot so vile, in a place become so like to hell ? The answer is, *he will* : he condescends to this thro' the mediation of his son, *who hath received gifts for men*, Psal. lxxviii. 18. to prepare hearts even *among the rebellious*, in which the most *high and holy God* might not refuse to take up his

residence. But *his dwelling with any here*, whom grace hath turned into *living temples*, is in order to *their dwelling with him in glory*. All tends upward in his design, with which the children of the kingdom are to fall in.

Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us not only from, but * OUT of this present evil world, according to the will of God even our father, Gal. i. 4. Hence all that have known the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, Phil. iii. 10. so as to become his disciples indeed, are said, not to be of the world, even as he was not of the world, John xvii. They are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, in faith, and hope, and holy diligence, seeking a better country, that is a heavenly; and under this character it is that the blessed God comes and joins them, to bear them company, and direct them thither.

They have his presence in the influence, and graces, and sometimes the comforts of his spirit; and thus he walks and talks with them, to relieve and sweeten the way: But at the end he will take them home to his house, to the mansions there prepared for them, where he will open to them his glory, and let out his love, in a manner they were never before able to bear, so as that they shall feel themselves happy, and have their souls drawn forth, in the highest raptures of love and thankfulness, joy and praise, saying, *Lord, 'tis good to be here*, this is heaven.

* So the original admits, and perhaps directs us to read, ὧς ἐλέγεται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆ ἐνεστώτος αἰῶνος ἀπογεύεσθαι.

This is what the believer has not yet reach'd, but is in pursuit of, making after. He often lifts his eyes to heaven, and as often says, as denoting the posture of his soul with reference to it, *blessed are they that dwell in the house of God*, Ps. lxxxiv. *that glorious one* prepared above; *they will be still praising him*, and this at another rate than any here can do. With these he desires and longs to join, and the stronger those desires are, the more grievous will be his present distance. Whoever can be unconcerned at this, a child of God has no greater burden, than that he knows God no better, loves him no more, is yet so unlike to him, so unprepared for the heavenly world and life, as to what he is there to be, and do, and see, and enjoy. Comparing his state here, with *theirs* within the vail, he can't forbear venting an undissembled groan, at the long *remove* he sees himself off, in a sense of the imperfection he finds himself under.

Well, tho' not *in possession* of the blessedness *reserved* in heaven, nor *perfect* as to our meetness for it, we have abundant encouragement to trust our dear Redeemer for *both*, for *both* to give up ourselves to him. *For this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance*, Heb. ix. 15. This as he purchased by his blood, is promised for his sake: the promise is *confirmed by an oath*; *that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lye, we might have strong conso-*

consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

This *Jesus*, after the expiation and purchase he has made, for opening the kingdom of heaven to all that believe, is in quality of *forerunner for us enter'd into it*, that *our hope may enter after him, into that which is within the vail*, and prove an *anchor to the soul both sure and stedfast*.

'Tis his *dying request*, with the greatest vehemence offer'd to the Father, that the head and members might be together, and none dear to him left at a distance from him. *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, John xvii. 24.*

He plainly declares it his design in going to heaven, to make all the provision necessary in order to their coming ; and that it should not be an ineffectual journey, or lost labour ; that he would take care, that every one of his followers should see and reap the advantage of it; so as to have no reason to complain that he called them to their loss, or that they trusted him to their disappointment. *In my father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you : and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also, John xiv.*

The glory reserv'd in heaven, 1 Pet. i. 5. is ready to be reveal'd, and he has the grace and power in his hand to carry on and compleat our meetness for it, and preserve us to it. He is *the author and finisher of our faith*, and of every other
grace,

grace, and the *Lord of glory*, Heb. xii. 2. so that in this we may be confident, that *he who hath begun a good work in us*, will go through with it, with an eye unto the day of *Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6. when it shall be produc'd perfect, and shewn to his praise.

He has the *dominion* of the *unseen* eternal world, and the *command* of the *passage* that lets into it. At what *time*, or from what *place* soever a *soul* expires that *belongs* to him, among the vast numbers that through death as a wide and open gate are crowding out of this into an endless state, he knows his *own*, and is ready to receive it, and shew himself a merciful and *faithful high priest*, in all that *then* and *there* we shall need him in, and are to trust him for. If *now* we were to go to God, it stands full to our use, *he now appears in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24. Tho' 'twill be of no advantage to others, it ought to be a comfortable thought to believers; as bound for eternity, put off when they will, they may be satisfied their Redeemer is never out of the way.

Holy souls, upon their being *absent from the body*, shall be *with Christ*, which is far better; and the *body* likewise comes within his charge, as he declares, *This is the father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*, John vi. 39. The perfected spirit shall have its own body suited to it, and thus he will shew every one of his people the *path of life*, that which leads to the *presence of God*, where there is
fulnefs

44 *The Redeemer's Claim.*

fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

Upon the whole then; tho' *this* is not the place of our rest, we know *where* to find it, and *who* is appointed to be our *Joshua* to lead us to the land of promise, and prepare us for the felicity that flows there. We are bid to *arise* and depart; and if it be ask'd whither? Christ seasonably calls to us from *heaven*, saying, *come up hither*, Rev. iv. 1. and in order to it *come to me*, Mat. xi. 28. And that there may be no colour for an anxious thought, or fruitless enquiry, *who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above?* Rom. x. 8. He would be conceiv'd of as *nigh to us* in the gospel, most present to his people's help in *the word of faith which we preach*. *The master is thus come and asketh for you. 'Tis his voice, behold I stand at the door and knock: my son give me thy heart.* He is to have it to all the purposes mentioned before, and for *this* as his crowning compleating work, viz. to prepare it for heaven, and *then fix, and fill, and satisfy it there*. *Arise* therefore, and for *this* also go to him, *behold he calleth thee*.

And here in making the surrender, as the bible directs our duty, and gives us encouragement, the believer's wants will help him to words, and teach him to speak with feeling and life: "O thou! who camest forth from God
 "to lead lost sinners to their happiness in him,
 "behold with compassion the vast distance that
 "yet remains, between my soul and its felicitating object, and fill up the uncomfortable space
 "with

“ with brighter and stronger emanations of heavenly light and love.

“ ’Twas thy grace that led me to chuse God for my portion, and so to place and expect my felicity in him ; and as he is only to be *fully enjoy’d* above, by such as are made perfectly like him ; to thee I come to have his image on me drawn to the life, that I may be prepared for the happiness thou hast shewn to my faith, and called up my hope and desires to. O perfect what thou hast begun in me, and then put me into possession of what thou hast bid me expect. Let me every day, under thy teaching and influence, know God better, and love him more, and so be disposed to take in more of his love. In this way, may my spark of love be made to glow, and rise and spread into a flame, turning all my soul as it were into love, that it may ascend with greater longing, ease and freedom towards God ; leaving its strangeness, doubts and fears behind ; and never stop, till it find itself, by thy hand and interest, lodg’d in the bosom of eternal love, where all my desires may be quieted, and expire into the fullest delight and joy.

“ ’Tis good for me to draw nigh to God : the nearer the better ; and when nearest of all, ’twill be best of all, for *then* ’twill be heaven with me, not *before*. As my displaced heart could find *no* rest till it came to God, it can have no *perfect* rest till taken home to dwell with him. As not having *apprehended* all that, *for which it is apprehended of grace*, its sighs and searches, breathings, motions, all point
“ higher,

“ higher, and mean heaven. I reach towards
 “ the glorious light, the blissful knowledge, the
 “ perfect, endless mutual love, that make up
 “ their happiness who dwell with God; but hav-
 “ ing as yet too faint and distant views, I crave
 “ and rely on thy help to lift me nigher, that *mine*
 “ *eyes may see the King in his beauty, in the land*
 “ *that is afar off*, Isa. xxxiii. 17.

“ I would not be unthankful for the disco-
 “ veries and joys of *faith*, in and by the gospel,
 “ in which, in comparison of the *jewish dispen-*
 “ *sation, we all with open face, behold as in a*
 “ *glass the glory of the Lord*: but thou hast
 “ taught me to conceive a difference between
 “ *seeing thro’ a glass darkly*, as is the most we
 “ here do, and *seeing face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
 “ Between *knowing in part as now*, and *knowing*,
 “ as ’tis said we *shall, even as also we are known*.
 “ The glass that reveals its object supposes a di-
 “ stance, and in some measure hides it too. The
 “ knowledge of God which I have hitherto at-
 “ tained. The delight which I have at any time
 “ found in communion with him, in the per-
 “ ception of *his* love, and the exercise of my
 “ *own*, I take as pledges, and preparatory to what
 “ is yet to succeed, which therefore I would im-
 “ prove to give fresh vigour to hope, and feed
 “ and enlarge my desires in aspiring to; and
 “ thus declare when it is best with me on earth,
 “ I am an expectant of heaven: *As for me I will*
 “ *behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satis-*
 “ *fied when I awake with thy likeness*, Psal. xvii. 15.
 “ ’Tis something higher, something better,
 “ than can be enjoy’d in this present world, and
 state,

“state, that must make up the happiness which
 “thy blood was shed to purchase, which the
 “gospel promises, which must fill up those
 “great words of being an *heir of God*, and joint
 “*heir with Jesus Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. and in
 “the bestowing of which *God will not be ashamed*
 “to be called his peoples God, but have the
 “riches of his grace for ever glorified. What it is I
 “don’t distinctly know, as eye has not seen, nor
 “ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive the
 “things which God hath prepared for them that
 “love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. But how great soever be
 “the blessedness of heaven, to thee my perfect
 “Redeemer and Saviour, who see’st and art in
 “possession of all, I give up myself to be per-
 “fectly fitted for it, and in the fittest season
 “and manner taken to it; my soul first, when-
 “ever dislodged, and soul and body in that day,
 “when thou shalt come to be glorified in thy saints,
 “and admired in all them that believe, 2 Thes. i.
 “10. saying, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit
 “the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation
 “of the world: enter into the joy of your Lord.”
 Mat. xxv.

These are the *purposes* for which the surrender
 is to be made: upon the hearing of which, I
 persuade myself, the less will need to be said to
 the next head, viz.

V. *Why the heart is to be given to Christ.*

The reasons for this may be considered as re-
 specting all in common; or such especially as are
 in their younger years.

I. As respecting all in common under the gos-
 pel:

pel: and so every one is to yield his heart to Christ,

(1.) *Because he requires it, whose authority is unquestionable, and whom we are bound to obey.* He is our great Lord and lawgiver, and so his voice, calling for the heart, lays an indispensable obligation upon conscience to consent, and makes it a sin in any to refuse or delay: and in case of disobedience, the greatest folly comes into the crime, as he will also be our final judge, by whose sentence, our eternal happiness or misery must be determin'd.

(2.) *The heart Christ claims is his due.* His right depends not on our consent, though this he calls for, because he will have no followers but volunteers. He hath dearly purchased what he demands, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood; and as hereupon you are not your own, but bought with a price, how reasonable is it you should practically acknowledge his claim, by surrendering yourselves to him, whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve?

(3.) *The ends for which Christ would have the heart are most desirable.* Upon a review of these, who can say or suspect that he calls any one to him to his disadvantage? He would make the heart better that's given to him, and the giver happy.

(4.) *The purposes for which the heart is to be resigned to Christ, are most necessary to be performed in us and for us, and these be only is sufficient for.* Who can think it indifferent whether he be pardon'd and purified, preserv'd and sav'd? And
if

if we stand in need of these, we stand in equal need of Christ, as *there is salvation in no other, and he is able to save to the uttermost* : He has done this for all that have yielded to his claim and are gone to heaven, and is the same *yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. We have therefore no fitter, no other hand into which to put our hearts ; and are undone if we detain them, and do not lodge them with him.

(5.) *Christ is willing, such is his grace, to accept of our hearts in quality of a Saviour*. How unworthy soever we have made them, 'tis the language of his own heart, *my son give me thine*, the language of love ; and when thus asking, how readily should every heart melt and open ?

2. With reference to *younger persons*, I shall only now say, to engage to a *speedy* compliance with the claim, which seems especially pointed to such :

(1.) *You can never give Christ your hearts too soon*. Who will say 'tis too soon to be safe ? Too soon to be happy both for time and eternity ? Too soon to be pardoned and delivered from the wrath to come, restor'd to the favour of God, and acceptance with him ; made meet for heaven, and set in the way that leads to it ; in a word, prepar'd for death and judgment, and for every providence that may meet us before ? This is the state which hearkening to Christ's voice lets into.

(2.) *If you give not your hearts to Christ now, it may be e'er long too late*. It will certainly be too late one moment after death, and can the youngest of you tell how many moments that is

off? *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*; but no gospel is to be sent after the dead, any more than any allow'd to come from them to us. No more *treaty* will be set on foot in the *next world*, to give the least hope to those who would not know the *things of their peace in this*. In whatever age the gospel finds us, the Redeemer's claim should immediately take place, as there can be no reason *against* it, and there is all the reason in the world *for* it. I therefore hasten to the next thing, which I would suppose you willing to know in order to practise, *viz.*

VI. *How, as to the manner, it concerns and becomes us to give our hearts to Christ.*

1. *This is to be a personal act*: A surrender which every one that nameth the name of Christ, and would be found among those that shall be owned by him, is to make for himself.

'Tis not sufficient to say, I was given to God and Christ in my *infancy*, by my parents or others in *baptism*; when we come to years, we are to shew we approve of the dedication, by making it an act of our own, saying, *Lord, as thou callest for my heart, I bere myself explicitly deliver it up; by my own consent it is thine.*

2. *With deep humility*; in a sense how *bad* the heart is made by sin, how often it has been refused to be given up to Christ, to be made *better*.

How humbling should be the thought, that my heart as *guilty*, should need the blood of Christ that was shed for remission, to cleanse it; as *corrupt*, that no power less than that of the *Holy Ghost*, the spirit of Christ, should be sufficient to heal it; and yet when he came and call'd

The Redeemer's Claim. 51

call'd for such a heart, to *pardon* and *purify* and present it with acceptance to God, I should detain it from him, and go on to make it worse and worse by sin, as if with this spiteful sense, "I'll render it as near a-kin to *hell* as possible, "before thou shalt have it to recover and prepare "for *heaven* : I'll deprave and harden it all I "can, that if ever it be thine, thou may'st have "the more to do upon it." How low should I lie as reflecting on this, when at length I come to yield it up. Tho' he will not upbraid me with it, I ought to make it matter of shame to myself, as giving him a heart, in which the *plague* has so long reign'd.

3. The returning sinner is to give Christ his heart *freely*. This the call directs to, my son *give*. He can't be sincere or hope for acceptance, who makes a surrender of himself to Christ no otherwise than a mariner in a storm throws his goods over board, with deep *reluctance*, as the effect of a hard law, which at the same time he had much rather been exempt from. This will not do. The dedication here is to be a *free-will offering*, out of *love* and *choice*, as what we see the greatest reason for, are sweetly drawn to, and have the highest satisfaction in; being better pleased to be the *Lord's*, than our *own* or any ones else in all the world.

4. It becomes us to do this with great *seriousness* and *solemnity*, as a matter of the highest importance and of everlasting consequence; as our business immediately lies with one that searcheth the heart, and is witness to all that passes, and to our temper and frame thro' the whole; and who

will e'er long be our final judge, and then deal with us, as herein we shall be found to have dealt with him.

5. *The Lord herein loves a chearful giver.* We are to bring and render our hearts to him with adoring thankfulness, that after all we have done against heaven, we should yet be in a state of hope, under the tenders and calls of grace, allowed, invited, encouraged to close with him, that it may go well with us for ever. What a holy joy should enliven the whole transaction? Whilst the heart is opening to its rightful Lord, rushing into the embraces of its dear and all-sufficient Redeemer.

6. Every one that gives his heart to Christ is to do it *for perpetuity*; with a settled purpose to leave it with him for ever. Christ does not call for the heart to be *lent* but given him; not for a day, or month, or for a limited time; in a good mood, or pang, or only to serve a turn; but that it may be his *intirely* and *always so*. This is implied in the notion of *giving*, according to which we are to act; a *making over ourselves to Christ, with a resolution never to change*, and thereupon to answer every temptation with it, *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back*, Jud. xi. 35.

Thus I have finish'd the *doctrinal part*, in which I have been carried into a greater length than was intended, under some of the heads: I have therefore the less *room*, and I hope the less *occasion* to enlarge, in *that* which is the *end*, and should be the *life* of every sermon, *viz.*

The

The APPLICATION.

That you yourselves may make the improvement to which all tends; methinks it should be enough to resume the words of the *text*, and desire you to hear them, as if *immediately* spoken by *Christ himself*, *My son, give me thy heart.*

This is the claim the Redeemer makes to you, and which you are to conceive him standing to utter in the most engaging manner, with compassion in his soul and looks, pointing to his *cross* with one hand to mind you of what he endured for you, and holding up a *crown* in the other, as what he is ready and desirous to bestow upon you, and by his agony, his blood, his love, his kingdom, thus pleading with you, *son, daughter, give me thy heart*: now what answer shall he have? Can you deny him? Can you neglect him, or admit the thought of putting him off? God forbid.

Remember what it is that is demanded, not *your names* only, but *your hearts*. You that by profession have enter'd yourselves among Christ's disciples, hear him urging you, upon this ground, to go one step farther, and be that indeed that you profess: *my son, give me thy heart*. 'Tis pity that *any* should take up the language of rebellion, and say, *we will not have this man to reign over us*; but whilst this is done by *open aliens and enemies*, he expects better treatment from *you*, who would be called and counted *sons*. As you would have Christ to be your *Saviour* in *reality*, how incongruous is it that you should be his *followers* only in *name*?

Think, how worthy Christ is of the heart he claims ? How dearly he has deserv'd it ? The claim he makes is founded in blood : for what end demands he it ? To make it *holy*, to make you *happy* : how long he has waited ? Too long on the youngest of you : and in a sense of all, let every one that hath hitherto been a stranger to him, presently resolve and say, He shall never have a denial more from me ; I will refuse no longer ; I now consent : Lord ! I own thy right in me, I bow to thine authority, I yield to thy claim, I cast myself on thy righteousness, power and grace ; I have no other Saviour, I desire no other, I can need no other ; overcome by thy love, I here, to all the ends of redemption, *give thee my heart : Lord save me, I am thine.*

To be instrumental in bringing souls to this, is the top of my ambition upon earth ; and to hear that what I have said has been succeeded to that end, would be the most pleasing news I could ever be told. May *he* whose claim it is, and for whom 'tis made, accompany it by his power to saving purposes ! Then, whether I know it or not, there will be *joy in heaven* over every one coming into the way to it ; and *there*, when *time* shall be no more, I hope to meet all such as thus resign their hearts to Christ, and join with them in singing *hallelujahs* to God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

T H E M E T H O D.

*I*N the text, Jesus Christ the speaker, by way of claim.
In the claim he makes, shewn,

I. *What is meant by the heart demanded.* page 6

This inclusive of the whole man.

Our all call'd for under this term, to denote,

- I. *That the heart comes under the Mediator's eye.* 7
2. *Where the heart is wanting, nothing else is valu'd or will be accepted by him.* 8
3. *None is reckoned to give himself to Christ, or any thing else in truth, who keeps back his heart.* 9
4. *Where Christ has the heart, nothing will be deny'd him that he calls for.* 10

II. *What is implied in giving the heart to Christ, as our act about it.*

To prepare the way to this, several things premis'd: as,

1. *We are to be considered as creatures that have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and by our apostacy are become guilty and vile before him.*
2. *In order to our being restored, God has so far pitied us as to chuse and call his own son to the office of Mediator, who is enter'd upon it.*
3. *All intercourse between God and man is now to be carried on through this Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ.*
4. *We are hereupon to conceive ourselves in a state of hope.* 11
5. *The saving benefits of Christ's redemption are only to be ours as united to him, or in the relation of his members.*
6. *Our own choice of Christ is absolutely necessary to such a relation, and so to our passing into a state of salvation.*

Upon these grounds, giving Christ the heart, carries in it,

1. *A renouncing whatever has hitherto claimed the heart, and kept it from Christ, in point*

*Of { subjection and love,
 { dependance and trust.*

2. *Closing in with the design in which he is engag'd as the Redeemer and Saviour of lost sinners.* 12
3. *Acknowledging the justice of his claim in the right of redemption, and taking it to ourselves, under the con-* 13

The M E T H O D.

- straints of love, a resigning ourselves up to him as his own.* 14
4. *Confiding in him with satisfaction upon the warrant of the gospel, as able and faithful to fulfil in us, and to us, whatever he has undertaken and promised to compleat our salvation.* 15
- III. *How Christ is to be considered as demanding the heart, and to whom 'tis thus to be given up.* 16
- In general, as Mediator, with all the properties that belong to him as such, to recommend him to our choice.*
- Distinctly,*
1. *As our prophet and teacher.* 17
2. *As our great high priest.*
3. *As our Lord and King.* 18
- IV. *For what purposes the heart is to be given to Christ.*
- Here both duty and privilege to be taken into our aim, and so we are to yield ourselves to Christ,*
1. *As dark and ignorant to be enlightened by him, to learn of him.* 19
- The dedication for this exemplified, with the grounds that support it.*
2. *As guilty, to be pardon'd and justified.* 20
- The scripture grounds for this drawn into use.*
3. *As polluted, to be purified and new made.* 24
- Regard herein to be had, not only to a renovation from corruption in gross, but as to particular instances wherein a cure is needed of the plague of every man's own heart: several instances mention'd in the surrender exemplified.*
4. *As probationers for eternity, to be* { *strengthen'd*
and
kept. 28
- (1.) *Strengthen'd to what is requir'd of us, or may be appointed to us, in our way to an endless state.*
- (2.) *Kept, and this with regard to our integrity and safety, notwithstanding in dwelling corruption, and surrounding temptation, and our danger and fears from both. The proper encouragements to this improved.* 30
5. *As expectants of heaven, to be perfectly fitted for it according to the quality of what is to be our employment and happiness there, and at length to be received to it.* 35
- The grounds for this propos'd, and the dedication at large drawn forth*

The METHOD.

- V. *Why the heart is to be given to Christ.* 47
The reasons for this consider'd,
1. *With respect to all in common under the gospel; and so every one is to yield his heart to Christ,*
 - (1.) *Because he requires it who is our law-giver and judge.*
 - (2.) *The heart Christ claims is his due.*
 - (3.) *The ends for which he would have the heart are most desirable.* 48
 - (4.) *The purposes for which the heart is to be resigned to Christ, are most necessary to be reformed in us and for us, and these he only is sufficient for.*
 - (5.) *Christ is willing to accept of our hearts in quality of a Saviour, in which his grace is most engaging.* 49
 2. *With reference to younger persons, to whom the claim seems especially directed.*
 - Two things propos'd to the consideration of such, to engage to a speedy compliance with it.*
 - (1.) *You can never give Christ your hearts too soon.*
 - (2.) *If you give not your hearts to him now, it may be e'er long too late.*
- VI. *How as to the manner it concerns and becomes us to give our hearts to Christ.* 50
1. *This is to be a personal act.*
 2. *With deep humility.*
 3. *Freely.* 51
 4. *With great seriousness and sincerity.*
 5. *With thankfulness and joy.* 52
 6. *For perpetuity.*
- Lastly, *The application and close.* 53

The

*The Blessedness of being betimes
in CHRIST.*

A

S E R M O N

PREACH'D to a

SOCIETY of YOUNG MEN,

CATECHIS'D

By the Reverend Mr. P O M F R E T.

The D E D I C A T I O N.

To the *Society of Young Men*, catechis'd by the
Reverend Mr. *Pomfret*.

Dear Sirs,

I Here send you the sermon preach'd at your place on Easter Monday, as soon as the frequent calls I have into the pulpit, and the many other demands upon my time, would allow me to transcribe it, in compliance with your request.

'Twas with great satisfaction that I understood the numbers of which your society consists, who in their younger years have so freely given up their names to Christ, and with so much zeal, unanimity and order, support and attend the evening lecture, set up for the opening and establishing the principles of religion; a work never more necessary than in the present day, when foundations are so boldly attempted to be destroyed, *Psal. xi. 3.* In endeavouring to fix and secure which, may the pleasure of the Lord go on to prosper in your minister's hand!

In

The DEDICATION.

In preaching to a society of young persons training up in the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. the nature of the exercise carrying on among you, led me to the choice of the present subject, the laying open the blessedness of being in Christ, of being early so, that with all your improvements in knowledge, you may rest in nothing short of this, but chiefly and presently look after it: if already secured, that you may take the comfort of it, and give God the glory.

Christ, and salvation by him, is the sum of the gospel: to bring sinners to him; to build them up in him; to prepare them to meet him with comfort, and be for ever with him, the work of every faithful minister of it. As labouring in this work with remarkable plainness, power and success, the name of Pomfret the father, will be long and deservedly precious in this city. Few can remember so many their comfort now, or expect so numerous a train, at the head of which to appear before the great shepherd and bishop of souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25. as the crown of their rejoicing, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming, 1 Thess. ii. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, and among these, the crown of your aged pastor is like to be of distinguish'd light, Dan. xii. 3. And what greater thing can you desire for the son, and every younger minister, and therein for yourselves, and the interest of Christ in one place and another, than that when such Elijah's are taken up, their spirit may remain and eminently rest on those that are to succeed in their room.

The ground there is to hope that many among you are subjects of the blessedness of being betimes in Christ, is matter of thanksgiving, in which I would heartily join; but what songs will it raise, when you and your fathers, and instructors in Christ, shall actually meet at his right hand, and be found and owned to be such as you were here taken for? That there be no disappointment in this, let me close with the apostle's exhortation, which there is always reason for, especially in a day of declension and danger: And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, 1 John ii. 28.

I am, with great affection and respect,

Your friend and servant, in the gospel of Christ,

D. WILCOX.

ROMANS XVI. 7. last Clause.

--- Who also were in Christ before me.

THESE are the words of the apostle Paul, and favour of his spirit.

You know his memorable declaration, *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found him, Phil. iii. 8.*

His conversation was so wonderful, and the grace of Christ manifested in it, that from the peculiar impression he thence received, 'tis observable, he delights to speak of nothing more than *union to Christ, being in him*. By this he measures his *own* happiness, and uses it as the highest character he could give his *friends*, that they were *in Christ*.

He speaks of himself, as *one born out of due time*, 1 Cor. xv. 8. in regard Christ was so late seen of him; and reckons it to the greater honour and advantage of others that were sooner converted to him: that were believers in Christ whilst he was a persecutor; in a state of grace whilst he was in a state of nature; pardoned in the blood of Jesus, and following him in faith and holiness to heaven, whilst he was a stranger and an enemy to him, under the guilt and power of sin, and liable to death, the wages of it. O happy they who were sooner rescu'd and recover'd;

being Betimes in CHRIST. 61

wash'd, and sanctify'd, and justify'd, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God, before I was: salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

I shall not stay on the former part of the character and commendation here given these two, but confine myself to the last words expressive of their standing in christianity, which as utter'd with an air of inward high esteem of their privilege may lead us to observe,

That there is a special blessedness annex'd to the being betimes in Christ.

He hath found a *treasure*, and hath reason of joy, who at any time on this side death, hath found the *Lord of life*, and an interest in him; but they are peculiarly happy who are in Christ early: gainers indeed, who before they have run the long apparent danger of losing their souls, have secured a Saviour.

To evidence this I shall shew,

- I. *What is the import of being in Christ.*
- II. *Something of the blessedness annex'd to the being found in him.*
- III. *The special advantages of being early so: Which will lead on the application.*

I. *What is the import of being in Christ.*

In general, 'tis the same as to be Christians; but all are not so in the same manner.

1. *Some are in Christ only externally, as by baptism entred into his church, joining with his people in his worship and ordinances, bearing his name,*

name, and making a visible profession of belonging to him. Of such Christ speaks, when he says of his father's dealing with his followers, *every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away*, John xv. 2. And again, *if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth * as a branch*; as what seem'd, or for a time was taken by men to be so, but was not in reality, or in the sight of God. Thus the apostle mentioning his being known to the churches of Judea, adds, *which were in Christ*, Gal. i. 2. which may be understood of the body of professing christians there, as distinguish'd from the Jews, said to be *in Christ* as owning themselves to be his followers, tho' there might be many unsound amongst them, who under a profession of Christ, had no special relation to him. But,

2. *Some are also in Christ by vital union*, and so members, in the language of scripture, *of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, Eph. v. 30. And *he that is joined to the Lord*, is said to be *one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

And this is the *being in Christ* that is here meant; what agrees to regenerate believers, and none else. Christ speaks of such as *dwelling in him, and he in them*, John vi. 56.

He takes hold of their souls by his quickning spirit, renewing them to his image, and begetting faith in them, by which they receive and close with him; consent to be his, and yield themselves to him; and thus by the *spirit on Christ's part*, and *faith on theirs*, the blessed union is made, by which they are said to be *in him that is true*, even in Jesus Christ, 1 John v. 20. par-

* V. 6. ὡς κλημα.

being Betimes in CHRIST. 63

takers of a divine nature from him, from the introduction of which, *both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*, Heb. ii. 11.

This is a mystery that hath riches of glory in it, which will not be fully understood on this side heaven, where they that are now *in Christ*, shall see him as he is, be perfectly like him, and so dwell with him for ever.

This leads us to consider,

II. *The blessedness annex'd to the being thus in Christ.*

You may see this,

I. *In the union itself.*

(1.) *As 'tis most intimate and endearing.*

The representations and similitudes given of it in *scripture* speak this.

Christ is there compared to a *foundation* for never-failing support, and believers are *built* upon him: a *vine*, a *head* for vital influence, and they are *implanted into him*, Rom. vi. 5. The church is *his body*, Eph. i. 23. and as such, its members have all supplies for life and strength, sense and motion, nourishment, growth, and perfection from him: he is a husband for the most tender love, and they are one flesh, one spirit with him.

How mysterious soever this be at present, Christ tells his disciples, by way of promise, of a day, when they shall better understand both his union with his father, and the mutual in-being between believers and him: *At that day ye shall know that I am in my father, and you in me, and I in you*, John xiv. 20.

His name is put upon them, his spirit communicated to them, by which they are inliven'd,
and

and the life of grace maintain'd in them, 1 Cor. xii. 12. and *hereby*, says the apostle, *know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit*, 1 John iv. 13.

This is the ground of that sympathy that there is between Christ and his members, whereby even in heaven, he hath the tenderest sense of what they suffer upon earth: *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, Heb. iv. 15. In all *their afflictions he is afflicted*, Col. i. 24. *their sufferings and enemies are his*, Acts ix. 4. and when the ruin of his disciples is design'd and fought, he calls down from his throne, declaring himself one with them: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*. How desirable is such a union as this?

(2.) 'Tis most honourable.

No title among men is comparable to that of being a *member of Christ*. This honour have all the saints, which cannot be said even of angels themselves. Angels are *subject* to him, and his willing servants, but are not stil'd his *body*, as the church is, Eph. i. 23. *Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, Heb. ii. 16. and stands in a peculiar relation to believers, as *redeemed from among men*, Rev. xiv. 4. and mystically united to him, so that he is *not ashamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11.

How great is this dignity who are thus united, and thus allied to the *Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. How poor and despised soever upon earth, they are in the highest esteem above. 'Tho' reckon'd the *off-scouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. 13. by a blind and malignant world, the great God speaks
of

of them in very different language : they are his own words applicable to every member of Christ, *since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee*, Isa. xliii. 4.

(3.) *'Tis most enriching.*

This is that which lets into a *participation of Christ*, as to all the blessings of his blood and love; the great things which he hath purchased, and is able and ready to bestow. *The riches of Christ are unsearchable*, Eph. iii. 8. and in these believers are admitted to share. *It pleased the father that in him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19. as a communicative head for the benefit of his members; and *of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. To such as are *in Christ Jesus, he is made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30. In Christ they are *blessed with all spiritual blessings*, and intitled to those that shall never end, Eph. i. 3. Christ is *heir of all things*, Heb. i. 2. and the scripture calls them *joint heirs* with him, Rom. viii. 17. All things, says the apostle, to believers, are *yours*, and as the ground of it, *ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

(4.) *'Tis most comfortable.* Nothing can be wanting to their support, who are taken into it. Living and dying from hence they may fetch relief. Tho' in the world they may have trouble, in Christ they shall have peace, and when they are dying out of the world, their Redeemer lives to succour and save. An interest therefore in him may alleviate all their afflictions, and sweeten every mercy ; add a taste to what they enjoy, and calm their spirits under the forest trial. What-

ever otherwise be the believers case, 'tis cordial enough, to be able to say, *my beloved is mine, and I am his*. I belong unto him, am *incorporated* with him, and he that is my head of influence, governs all the world; is acquainted with my case, and able to save; knows the fittest season wherein to do it, and will not fail to remember me when that season comes, and in the mean time his *grace is sufficient* for me. What consolation may spring up in the soul from such a thought as this?

(5.) 'Tis an *immediate union*; that is, every member in the mystical body, as to conjunction, stands equally near the head; they are all *in him*.

There is but one chief *corner-stone* laid in *Sion*, *elect* and *precious*, to whom all believers coming as to a *living stone*, are as *lively stones built up a spiritual house*, 1 Pet. 4, 5, 6. an *habitation of God thro' the spirit*, Eph. ii. 22.

By *one spirit* they are all *baptized into one body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. every living member in which *holdeth the head*, Col. ii. 19. and 'tis the privilege of the meanest believer, as well as the strongest, to have *fellowship with him*, 1 John i. 3. The apostle speaks of all saints as standing in the same relation to the only Saviour, even *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*, 1 Cor. i. 2.

Lastly, 'Tis an *inseparable everlasting union*: can never be dissolv'd: is above the reach of death, out-lives the grave.

They that are *once in Christ* shall be *for ever* so. Tho' the nearest ties and relations upon earth are dissolvable and dissolving, even to that betwixt soul

being Betimes in CHRIST. 67

soul and body ; Christ and a believer shall never be disjoin'd. *Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end*, John xiii. 1. and *because he liveth, they shall live also*, John xiv. 19. *him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out*, nor shall any be able to pluck out of his hand, John vi. 37. Hence the apostle carries his triumph, in the name of believers, to the greatest height, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* and concludes with a firm persuasion, that neither the things he mentions, how formidable soever, nor *any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. 35---39. Thus the union *itself* shews the desirableness of being in Christ.

2. This may be farther seen in some instances of the happiness annexed to it, or that belongs to those who are found in Christ. As,

(1.) *All that are in Christ have their sins pardoned.* And oh the blessedness of that man, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, Ps. xxxii. 1.

Unpardon'd guilt is the burden of conscience, the sting of death, the fuel of hell, a weight under which the secure sinner is insensibly sinking down into that *place of torment*, and the wounded spirit ready to die thro' fear of going thither : Oh happy they ! who *weary and heavy laden*, applying to Christ, have found *rest unto their souls*, Mat. xi. 28. *having redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins*, Col. i. 14.

(2.) *They are also freed from sins reigning power.*

Under the influence of this, we are naturally employ'd in fighting against God, and undoing our own souls ; living after the *flesh*, and so in

the way to death, Rom. viii. 13. But if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. God sending his Son to bless his people, by turning away every one of them from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26. Their corrupt natures are healed, as well as their guilt removed, the spirit of life from Jesus Christ making them free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. Its dominion is taken away, tho' its life in believers is prolong'd for a season; in the mortification of which, by the help of the spirit, they are still engaged, and shall at last obtain a compleat deliverance, that *they whom the son makes free, may be free indeed*, John viii. 36. And as assured of this, even whilst they are groaning under a body of death, and complaining of their wretchedness upon that account, they can go on and add thanksgiving to God, thro' Jesus Christ, who will bring the struggle to the most desirable end, Rom. vii. 24, 25.

(3.) *They are rescu'd from the tyranny of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2.

The God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and so leads them captive at his will, ruling over them in order to their ruin, 2 Tim. ii. 26. They are said to be of their father the Devil, and the lusts of their father they will do, John viii. 44. If he bids them sin against God, break his laws, despise his grace, increase their guilt, and so fit themselves for destruction; they readily obey: what a mercy is it to be freed from such a state as this? as all believers are, being come over to Christ, and therein have abundant reason to join with the apostle,

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in giving thanks unto the father, who hath delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of his dear son, Col. i. 12, 13.

(4.) They are delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law, and so from an everlasting hell, and so from the constant danger of dropping into it.

He that believeth on Christ is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God, John iii. 18. We are all by nature children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3. bound over to it, prepared for it; and he that has no part in the only Saviour, is still under the dreadful doom; the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 36. He lives by unassured favour; and if he die in that condition, is lost for ever; and how soon may death put an end to his reprieve? And how fearful a thing is it to fall condemned into the hands of the living God? Heb. x. 31. Oh blessed news! that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1. who hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, Gal. iii. 13. deliver'd them from the wrath to come, and from the tormentful fear of death as the passage to it, 1 Thess. i. 10. under which they would otherwise have been all their life-time subject to bondage? Heb. ii. 14.

(5.) All that are in Christ are upon his account brought into a state of favour with God, whose loving-kindness is better than life, Psal. lxxiii. 3. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. 1. And

how unspeakable is the happiness of having the Most High my friend, who can do infinitely more for me than all the world besides? *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Rom. viii. 31. who has the whole creation to command, and the power of life and death in his hand. There is a peculiar favour that he bears unto his own, Psal. cvi. 4. which employs all his other perfections for their good; and how well may their souls dwell at ease, who thro' the 'great reconciler are interested in this, and so dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, Psal. xci. 1. In the multitude of their thoughts within them, the comforts of God as at peace with them, are sufficient to delight their souls, Psal. xciv. 19.

(6.) They are moreover adopted into his family, that of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the head. As many as receive him, as he is graciously offer'd, and so come into fellowship with him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, John i. 12. who hereupon are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, Eph. ii. 19.

(7.) Nor is it an empty title that is confer'd upon them; but being children they are heirs too, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, Rom. viii. 17. How mean soever may be their condition upon earth, they have a glorious inheritance in heaven: their title to it is sure, and so e'er long shall the possession be. Upon this ground Christ bids his little flock not to fear, it being

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being Betimes in CHRIST. 71

the father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom,
John xii. 32.

They that are *without Christ* are *without hope* too; without hope of heaven, and abstracted from this, how little while will any thing last that can be enjoy'd upon earth? How unsuitable is it all to an immortal soul, and unable to satisfy; *He that hath not the son, hath not life,* 1 John v. 12. *hath not the life of grace,* and without a change, shall *never see the life of glory.* But as to believers, this, saith the apostle, *is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his son.* *He that hath the son hath life,* John v. 24. that life which is everlasting, and is so well secured, that he shall *never come into condemnation.*

(8.) *Whilst on this side heaven they have the privilege of free access by prayer unto God, and are always welcome, being made accepted in the Beloved, in whom the father is always well-pleased,* Eph. i. 6.

The throne of glory is as to believers turned into a throne of grace, in the midst of which their ascended Lord appears, as the Lamb that has been slain, Rev. v. 6. and having such an high priest over the house of God, and a new and living way that he hath consecrated for them, thro' the vail, that is to say his flesh, Heb. x. 20. by that way they may come with a holy boldness, and full assurance of faith to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16.

Whatever are their burdens, or wants, they have this relief at hand, to open all their case to
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their heavenly Father, and pour their complaints into his ear, who never *said unto the seed of Jacob*, the members of Christ, *seek ye me in vain*, Isa. xlv. 19. Whilst *the sacrifice of the wicked*, that slight a Saviour, *is an abomination to the Lord*. *The prayer of the upright*, for the sake of their *Advocate with the Father*, *is his delight*, 1 John ii. 1. He is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think*, Eph. iii. 20. and after the gift of his son *for them*, and *to them*, they have no reason, in any other instance, to question his grace. He, saith the apostle, *that spared not his own son, but deliver'd him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

Sinners who choose to *live* without God, may, while they find selves at ease, make light of all talk of addressing to him, or the advantage that, as to this, others may have beyond them; but what will they do in a day of trouble? having no God to whom to pray, but one that they have no saving interest in, no special relation to. Indeed his willingness, through his son, to shew mercy, makes despair unreasonable, and hope and so prayer their duty in a returning way: but who sees not the peculiar happiness of believers, who are well laid in against an evil day, having a God in a distinguishing manner their *own*, to whom to go upon all occasions in the name of Christ, under the encouragement of his promise, *whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*, John xiv. 13, 14. Which he repeats again to leave no room for doubt, *if ye shall ask any thing in my name I will do it*. To assist and enable them to ask

ask aright, they have an intercessor *in* them, as well as *above* pleading *for* them. They are the *sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ*, Gal. iii. 26. and *because they are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. This spirit *helpeth their infirmities*; as we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself *maketh intercession for us*: And he that *searcheth the heart, knoweth what there is the mind of the spirit*, because he *maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God*, Rom. viii. 26, 27. who in answer to prayer of his own exciting, will *supply all their wants, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ*, Phil. iv. 19.

(9.) That all their heaven may not be in reserve, they are not only allow'd to draw near to God, but he condescends to draw near, and even to dwell with them. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, stands in the same relation to all his members, so as can be said of no other; and accordingly deals with them in a way of peculiar endearment. In him they are beheld, in him beloved, and hereupon divine manifestations are made to them, such as the world knows nothing of. We read of a joy, that a *stranger intermedleth not with*, Prov. xiv. 10. This hath its foundation in what Christ promises his followers, as the fruit of *his* love, and the reward of theirs: *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*, John xiv. 23. And how great is their happiness who are admitted to this, and know it? So as to be able to say in inviting

viting others to share with them, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3. Not to multiply heads;

Lastly, *They that are in Christ have their perseverance secured while they live; the reception of their souls to heaven at death; a glorious resurrection of their bodies, and a blessed eternity.*

During their stay upon earth, they are under the care and protection of heaven: supplies from their glorious head shall not fail to maintain the life of grace within, nor shall they be tried beyond their strength in any instance from without. *Angels* are appointed as *ministring spirits* to attend and bear them company thro' this world, and at last convoy them to the regions of glory, *Heb. i. 14.* And that their preservation may be sure, they are *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet. i. 5.

Christ in his *Testament*, which is of force, and unalterable by his *death*, *Heb. ix. 17.* appoints *unto them a kingdom*, *Luke xxii. 29.* into which being risen, he as *forerunner is for them entered*, *Heb. vi. 20.* with a declared purpose to prepare for their coming, and keep open the way, *John xiv. 2.* Hereupon their dissolution comes under his direction and order, as *having the keys of the passage from time to eternity.* And when he sends for the souls of believers, they have the privilege of breathing them into his hand, as ready to receive and bear them with acceptance to the Father: and thus *being absent from the body*, they are *present with the Lord*, *2 Cor. v. 8.* which is far better, *Phil. i. 23.* adding to the *spirits of the just that are made perfect*, *Heb. xii.*

23. and so enter into the joy of their Lord, Mat. xxv. 21.

And tho' their bodies do go down to the grave, they do not lose their relation to Christ. Believers, by virtue of their union to him, *dye in the Lord*, sleep in Jesus, and are said to be *blessed even when dead*, Rev. xiv. 13. their souls are so, as *immediately* with him; and as to that part that is deliver'd breathless to the earth, 'tis also design'd for his kingdom, and sleeps under his eye as guardian of their dust, which however scatter'd, is precious and sacred. The *bodies* of believers are particularly call'd the *members of Christ*, the *temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19. and tho' sadly defac'd for a time, they shall not be finally destroyed, or left in ruins, but raised at length with greater glory. Christ's resurrection is the pattern and pledge of theirs, and will infallibly infer it as desirable and blessed. The same spirit will be the efficient of both: *If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by the spirit that dwelleth in you*, Rom. viii. 11. *Christ being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of them that slept*, 1 Cor. xv. 20. and as he rose in glory, they shall in this be conformed to him. Rom. viii. 29. *He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashion'd like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*, Phil. iii. 21. His mystical body in all its members is dear to him, and of all that the Father has given him he will lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day.

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John vi. 39. Christ as risen and appointed to be the judge of the world, will summon his enemies to his bar, and by his power bring up their bodies from the grave to receive their doom from his mouth : but his members shall be raised by him as their Redeemer and Saviour in a way of favour, in order to their full felicity, and his own honour ; as he shall *come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.* The former shall be constrained against their wills to appear, being brought forth as malefactors, to *be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,* 2 Theff. i. 9. the other shall kindly and cheerfully awake, and at opening their eyes, break forth into singing, as finding the day of their compleat redemption.

In that day, all that are in Christ, being collected into one body, and plac'd at his right hand, shall be openly acquitted and acknowledg'd by him, and called up, as the *blessed of his Father, to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world,* Mat. xxv. upon which they shall triumphantly follow the captain of their salvation, into that *presence of God where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore,* Psal. xvi. 11. and so, as the sum of their happiness, *be ever with the Lord ;* wherefore christians are bid to comfort one another with these words, 1 Theff. iv. 17, 18. The happiness contain'd in them is so sure, that the apostle speaks of it as if already in possession by them, seeing it is so, by him who is their representative and head : *God, who raised up Jesus,* 1 Cor.

iv. 14. *bath quickned us together with Christ, and bath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 5, 6.* Besides all this,

III. *There are special advantages of being early in Christ, which, as speaking to younger persons, I would offer as inducements to hasten to him. As,*

1. *Being early in Christ is the best preservative from sin, so displeasing to God, and which will fill the guilty with so much horror in the review.*

Unspeakable is the advantage of young converts upon this account, and the reason is obvious. We bring with us a corrupt nature into the world, stock'd with the seeds of all manner of sin, and strongly inclin'd to it. Hence *childhood and youth are vanity, Eccles. xi. 10.* and prone to grow more vain and vile. *The heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil, Eccl. viii. 11.* And as one sin leads on to another; one act of rebellion against God, to a higher; to what a height of impiety may they arrive, and are like to do, unless cut off by death, or powerfully restrain'd, who remain uncharg'd for many years?

How monstrously wicked are many grown? how ripe for hell? before they are arrived to manhood: waxing worse and worse every year: spending their time in dishonouring God, serving the Devil, despising Christ, resisting the Holy Spirit, walking after the Flesh, multiplying their iniquities of every kind; and to what a mighty mass will they amount at last, tending to sink the soul into despair, when God shall *write bitter things against them, and make them to possess the sins of their youth?* Job xiii. 26. Oh, the blessed-
ness

ness to be freed from this! In old age, not to have our *bones full* of them, *Job xx. 11.* to accompany us in their guilt and bitter remembrance down to the grave.

How piercing is it to the souls of such as have at last found mercy? That so many years, of the prime of their time, were spent in *declaring their enmity against God by wicked works*: that they were some of the chiefest of sinners, before they became saints: did so much for the devil, before they did any thing for God. St. Paul cannot think of his having been a *persecutor, blasphemer, injurious, &c.* without the deepest sorrow; and after he is pluck'd as a brand out of the burnings, you may well believe, he would have reckoned it no small addition to his happiness to have been among the disciples of Christ when he was breathing out slaughter against them. This makes him speak with so quick a sense of their privilege, who were in Christ before him. How earnestly doth David pray? *Lord, remember not against me the sins of my youth*, *Psal. xxv. 6.* And that you may never know the misery of being laden with them, pray, "Lord change my nature by drawing me to Christ, that being in him *a new creature, born of God*, I may not sin against thee at the rate I am otherwise like to do."

2. *Hereby you will be sav'd from being destructive examples to others*; drawing them on in sin together with yourselves.

Should this be the case of any that is afterwards recovered and brought home to Christ, how sad must be the thought? "There are *some* of my old companions in hell, that I hasten'd to that place

“ place of torment, from whence there is no redemption : others in the way thither, whom “ I have help’d to harden, but ’tis not in my “ power to reclaim. Oh, the precious immortal souls that I have been instrumental in destroying, but cannot save ! ” Happy ! thrice happy they ! who by being betimes in Christ, are employed in better work, and have no ground for such heart-breaking complaints as these.

3. *Hereby you’ll be fitted for more eminent service for God and your generation ; be common blessings, in helping to keep off judgments, and bring down mercy upon the places of your abode. Onesimus, a servant running from his master, and finding a Saviour, returns with advantage, with this recommendation from Paul the aged, who had begotten him in his bonds, in his letter to Philemon, who in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me, Philem. ver. 11. And how desirable is it to have such a character as imploy’d for God and Christ in our younger years ? What a privilege to set out for Sion in the morning of our days ? To be travelling heaven-ward as soon as we can go ? And to how many may you be of use in their way thither, if God spares your lives ?*

4. *Hereupon you’ll be especially dear to heaven ; in the number of those whom God and Christ will delight to favour and honour.*

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, *Eccl. xii. 1.* and by the appointed Mediator yielding yourselves to God, *Rom. vi. 13.* from this time, in this manner, crying unto God, *my Father thou art the guide of my youth, Jer. iiii.*

4. he will *remember* with distinguishing pleasure and care, *the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals*, Jer. ii. 2. and with the greatest tenderness *take you by the arms, and teach you to go*, Hos. xi. 3. And *when father and mother forsake you, or are taken from you, then the Lord will take you up*, Psal. xxvii. 10. *for in him the fatherless find mercy*, Hos. xiv. 3.

Looking unto Jesus, 'tis part of his character as the great and good shepherd, *he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom*, Isa. xl. 11. expressive of peculiar regards to such as in their tender years give him their hearts. St. John, who is supposed to be the youngest of the apostles, *leaned on his master's breast*, and is known by that blissful title, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, John xxi. 20. If *we love him, 'tis because he loved us first*, 1 John iv. 19. and where his revealed love hath kindled in younger ones a sacred flame, putting them upon seeking after him, he is ready to meet and reward it with more of the same, as he graciously declares, *I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me*, Prov. viii. 17.

5. This will speak you signal instances of the sovereignty and riches of grace, that may be matter of comfortable reflection to you all your days: that your heavenly father would not suffer you to be the companions of such as are growing old in wickedness, and so rendring their recovery more difficult, or their condemnation more dreadful, but early set you apart as *vessels of honour* for himself. If it be sad to see so many *despising the divine goodness, and after their hardness and impenitent*

tent heart treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God? Rom. ii. With what pleasing wonder and thankfulness may you think of that Grace, that singled you out and made you to differ? that he should be to the praise of his glory who first, or before many others, trusted in Christ, upon hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, Eph. i. 12, 13.

6. As early in Christ become new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. and so walking as he also walked, 1 John ii. 6. you'll be most like to attain a comfortable evidence of the sincerity and truth of grace, and so that you are the objects of God's eternal choice, 2 Thess. ii. 13. chosen to salvation, or to be with Christ above, and preparatory to it, to be conformed to his image in sanctification here, Rom. viii. 29. and being already called into the kingdom of God's dear son, Col. i. 13. into fellowship with him in the kingdom of grace, may live in the pleased hope of the heavenly glory, 1 Cor. i. 9. for whom God calleth and justifieth, them he also glorifieth, Rom. viii. 30.

7. Hereupon your great work upon earth will be over, being early provided for a blessed eternity: and having nothing to fear beyond the grave, you will be ready for death, come when it will, and may bid it welcome, as among the things that, by virtue of your union and relation to Christ, in a way of benefit are called yours, 1 Cor. iii. 22. That which to others is the king of terrors, Job xviii. 14. will come to you, by your Redeemer's order, without a sting, as a messenger of peace; and in case it meet you

young, it will but the sooner remove you from a state of sin and trial, and the sooner let you into the joy of your Lord.

Lastly, *If you are longer spared, by being sometimes in Christ, you'll have a fair advantage of making a greater proficiency in grace, and so enlarge your capacity for greater glory: As you advance in years, you may abound in all the fruits of righteousness that spring from union to Christ: and doing so, whilst others are scarcely saved, go away full of fears, and set in a cloud; an entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 11.*

That which remains is the *Application* of the whole in the uses that are obvious.

1. *Is it the happiness of some to be in Christ before others? hence learn, that a state of nature is a christless state, and so a very miserable one.*

'Tis not the condition of the *Ephesians* alone that the apostle describes before Conversion, when he says of them, *at that time ye were without Christ, and so without hope, Eph. ii. 12.* This as descended from a corrupt original, the lapsed head of mankind, may be said of all his posterity: *For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Job xiv. 4. The first man is of the earth earthy, and such are all his seed; the second man is the Lord from heaven, after whose image believers are created spiritual and holy: Howbeit that is not first that is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual, 1 Cor. xv.* All that

are implanted into Christ are cut off from the *old stock*, to which they did before belong.

Now to be *out of Christ* is to be as *miserable* as it is *natural*. If unpardon'd guilt, reigning corruption, bondage to Satan, being without hope of heaven, liable to an everlasting hell, condemn'd already, and under the abiding wrath of God, in danger every moment of being cut off by death and cast into it, &c. If any thing, or all of this, denote a state *miserable*, *theirs* is truly so who are out of Christ.

2. *Is there a being in Christ by vital union, on which all our hope and happiness depend? How dangerous must it be to rest in a meer profession of being his disciples, and what multitudes are like to perish as looking no farther! You know his declaration, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Mat. vii. 21. And this is the Father's will and commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, 1 John iii. 23.*

Beware you do not hastily conclude your interest in Christ, and go on secure of being at last owned by him, from things that will not warrant it. With reference to the final judgment he tells us, *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out Devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity, Mat. vii. 22. With what confusion will the groundlessly confident be covered*

at such an answer? And who would not tremble at the thought of being found of that number?

We read that *the hypocrite's hope shall perish; be cut off, and prove as the spider's web*, Job viii. 13, 15. If he lean upon it, 'twill sink under him: tho' he endeavour to hold it fast, 'twill fly from him: when he shall have most need of it, and look for most from it, 'twill fail him: for

what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Job xxvii. 8. Under such cautions let every one say to himself, "What the better would be my case?"

"nay, how much the worse, should I conclude my interest in Christ secure, upon grounds that will not stand the trial at his bar?"

3. *Is there so great a blessedness annexed to the being in Christ, to the being betimes in him, how unreasonable is the backwardness of sinners to close with an offer'd Saviour? And yet how commonly is it discover'd?* Of this experience is full evidence, so that it needs more to be lamented than prov'd. The prophet's complaint may be still kept up, *who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Isa. liii. 1. "Though none are invited to Christ to their loss, the most make light of him as if they were; leaving him to call, and knock, and wait, and complain, *ye will not come to me that ye might have life*, John v. 40. How little hath the merciful Redeemer deserved such contempt at the hands of sinners? and how justly will they bear the blame of their own destruction, who perish by *neglecting so great salvation?*

4. *With what seriousness should every one concerned*

cerned about his everlasting happiness or misery, take up and pursue the enquiry, am I in Christ, yea, or no?

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. I am one of those that need his salvation: This Saviour hath been offered unto me: have I accepted of him? am I in him? about what can I employ my time that can yield me comfort, whilst the important case is unresolv'd? how fading are all things in this world? how little while will they last? and how poor a portion have I got, whatever else I could say is mine, if I cannot say that Christ is mine? though I am now in the morning of my life, and have been comparatively but a little while in the world, how much less may be the time that I may be allow'd to see? who can say at the beginning of any year, or month, or day, that he shall be continued to the end of it, or not be snatch'd away before it be half over? how many have been so, short of our age, and who perhaps promised themselves many years to come? and how near may I be to my great change? and what can support me in a dying hour? but a well-grounded hope of an interest in Christ, besides whom there is salvation in no other.

When the matter is thus, who can say 'tis too soon for the most awakening concern? You that are now in the prime of your days, remember you are made for another world, and passing to it: heaven and hell are before you, in one or the other of which you are to have your everlasting abode: you were born in sin, and so by nature

children of wrath : *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,* John iii. 16. *Christ came to seek and to save such as were lost ;* now as some of the lost number, have you accepted of him as a Saviour to you, consenting in the appointed way to be saved by him ?

Who can think himself too young to consider this, that is not too young to dye ? nor to be happy or miserable to eternity after death ? and must be saved or condemn'd in judgment, according as he shall be found *in Christ*, or a stranger to him ?

Come then, O my soul, let me repeat it again, to whom do I belong ? am I in the number of Christ's disciples and members, or rank'd with his enemies ? whilst I see so many young persons corrupt and vain ; mindless of their souls and of their Saviour ; do I live to him and for him ? are my desires after him ? is my heart upon him ? do I study his will, and stately endeavour to please and follow him, hating every sin as that which he came into the world to save me from ? *Whoever is in Christ is a new creature : old things are done away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God,* whose work it is to make so blessed a change.

Wherefore try what of this you can find in yourselves : call in the help of the spirit, and beg of God that you may not be deceived, and according to the discovery that may be made by an impartial search, I would a little distinctly speak both

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both to those that are not, and those that thro' grace are found in Christ.

1st. To you who are so far from being in Christ before others, that you are not, in a saving manner, in him at all.

In a review of what has been said of the blessedness annexed to the being in Christ, I appeal to you whether you have not sufficient encouragement to look out after 'an interest in him? to do it without delay? In his name and stead I invite you to him; beseech you by all that is dear and desirable to you, presently to receive and close with him. He is *able to save to the uttermost*, and *willing* to receive all that come unto God by him, *Heb. vii. 25*. He died to testify his Love, and lives to give out the purchase of his blood.

Children, of whomsoever descended, he will make you the children of God.

Servants, in whatever place, you shall be the *Lord's freemen*, 1 Cor. vii. 22.

Younger ones of every condition, what should you labour after if not an interest in Christ? and what reason can there be against doing it now? why should not that which is the *one thing necessary* and most desirable, be first sought? and what pity is it that the prime of your time should be spent in the pursuit of any thing else to the neglect of a Saviour; without whom there is nothing but *vanity and vexation* in this world, and damnation in another.

I know many flatter themselves with purposes of coming in hereafter, as if their time, or the means of grace, or the influences of the spirit,

were secured to them, or at their own command. Whereas all our times are in the hands of God : and he that says he shall live so long, or enjoy the same advantages for his soul hereafter that he despises now, must promise for God and himself too. Thousands thro' delay have been snatch'd away unready, and why should you run the hazard of being of the number, and so having your lives and hopes cut off together ? None ever repented his early choice of Christ ; as *whoso findeth him findeth life*, and would not for a world be in his former state : but how many are bewailing, and must for ever bewail, their standing out so long ? why should not the blessedness annex'd to the being betimes in Christ be yours ? In order to it,

1. *Be deeply sensible of your misery in a christless state, and get your hearts affected with it.* Only the weary and heavy laden will come to him for rest to their souls, Mat. xi. 28. They that be whole, or conceit themselves so, disvalue the physician, Mat. ix. 12. but *they that are sick* will think no haste too great, to the *only* one that is able to save.

2. *Study Christ's amiableness and excellency to raise and keep alive your hopes :* consider his office and character ; what he is appointed to do, of the Father, and has already done for others, and that as to every thing to be desired in a Saviour, that may denote him *precious*, *he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8.

3. *Beware of consulting flesh and blood, hearkening to the tempter, or your own misgiving hearts, which will be ready to cast a thousand bars in your way*

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way to a Saviour. Particularly, as you love your souls, avoid the company of christless sinners, who make a mock of sin, and light of a Saviour, and are ready to deride and reproach all such as are not so mad as themselves.

4. *Apprehend the necessity of a power above your own, to bring you into that union to Christ, to which your blessedness is annexed.* If any are in Christ, they are *so of God*, 1 Cor. i. 30. by the influence of his spirit, for which your prayers are to go up, with all the earnestness and constancy that becomes those who are under the powerful persuasion, that you have *destroyed yourselves*, but in God is your help, Hos. xiii. 9.

5. *In hope of this, diligently attend the ministrations of the gospel, in which Christ is revealed and offered, and with which the power is ordinarily put forth, by which souls are prepared for a Saviour, and implanted into him, Faith cometh by bearing, and bearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17. which is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth, Rom. i. 16.

6. *As union to Christ is not to be brought about without mutual consent, whenever the spirit strives with you persuading to this, cherish his motions, and set in with them.* Thank God that you are not forsaken, and continue to pray that he may go on to strive to a blessed issue. As you desire this, take heed of putting a bar in the spirit's way, by neglect, opposition, or undoing delay. Side not with the flesh against the kind design the spirit is carrying on, nor put him off to another season. Remember the uncertainty of life, the deceitfulness of sin, and of your own hearts, and
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the subtlety of the grand enemy of souls. You'll grow harder by longer continuance in sin, and so your recovery will be with more bitter repentance if ever it be effected; or your misery more aggravated if you go hence unchang'd; and should death steal upon you unprepared, you are the next moment past hope, undone for ever. Wherefore no more resist the blessed spirit, nor refuse an inviting Saviour: instead of this, let it be the language of every heart, *Lord, I am thine*, taking him as offer'd for *yours*, and this as the *accepted time*, would be unto you *the day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

2dly, For you who are in Christ, in a manner that makes and speaks you blessed indeed.

1. *Let it greatly affect you, to think what God has done for you in giving you an interest in his son, and acknowledge it to the praise of the glory of his grace.*

Which way can you look and not find occasion for enlarged thankfulness? considering how many never so much as heard of Christ: how many under the gospel continue to despise him? how many have been cut off in their distance from him? and that either of these might have been the case with you: but instead of this, with what adoring wonder may you view the grace that hath made you to differ, in being of God *in Christ*? which is the highest thing that can be said of any upon earth, and infers heaven.

Blessed be God, may every believer say, for casting my lot in *Emmanuel's* land; for holding my guilty soul in life, that his long-suffering towards me might issue in my salvation: that he
would

would not only make me the offer of a Saviour, but strive with me by his spirit, and continue to do so, till he had gain'd my consent, and brought me into vital union to Christ, wherein my felicity is sum'd up. What mercy herein hae God shewn to me? and what returns of gratitude are due to him? *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name, Ps. ciii. 1. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, and when I die, I shall do it far better: I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being. Ps. civ. 33.*

2. *Have recourse to your blessedness in being in Christ to reconcile you to the want or denial of any thing else.*

When first awaken'd in good earnest to inquire what you should do to be saved, remember what low apprehensions you had of all that the world could do for you: as it could not pardon your sins, or cover your spots, or ease your consciences, or procure your acceptance with God: but Christ could do all, and he alone could do it; and in that apprehension, how earnestly did you pray, *Lord, give me Christ, whatever else I am denied! Lay upon me what thou pleasest*, he shall be my support: take from me what thou wilt, strip me of all my pleasant things, Christ shall be to me instead of all, and infinitely better. And if he still holds the same place in your esteem, make it appear, by your improving it to your calmness and content in every state. However it go as to externals, say christian, looking unto Jesus, *in him the lines are pleasantly fallen to me, Psal. xvi. 6. in him I have the better part that shall not be taken from me, Luke x. 42. Return unto thy rest,*

O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee, Psal. cxvi. 7.

3. Pity and pray for such as are yet strangers to Christ, and do what you can that they may no longer continue so.

I might urge this on parents and heads of families, with reference to their children and servants that are unrenew'd. Be in *travelling pains*, 'till Christ be formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. You know the deplorable state they are in by nature, and that all their happiness depends upon a part in Christ: and what an addition would it make to your own joy, in any good hope of this as to yourselves, to see such as are dear to you, and whom you can't but have a concern for, belonging in truth to the same Saviour.

4. Look upon all Christ's members as brethren, and love them as such, for the sake of him to whom they belong, and whose image they bear. You know how strongly as to this our common Lord has declared his will, *a new commandment I give unto you*, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you*. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another, John xiii. Tho' all the members of Christ's mystical body are not of the same strength or stature, age or excellency, as we read of *babes in Christ*, 1 Cor. iii. 1. as well as young men and fathers, 1 John ii. 13. and here there is a difference of office, as in the parts of the *body natural*, nevertheless 'tis an everlasting ground of love among all that believe, *that they are in the body*; that body, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the head, 1 Cor. xii. and for the members of which heaven is prepared, who therefore

therefore should sympathize and rejoice with each other, and not fall out by the way, Gen. xlv. 24.

5. *Being in Christ, remember the obligation you are under, to abide, and shew it by walking as he also walked.* The members of Christ are to be as like him as possible; and 'tis a reproach upon them, to give occasion for the question, *Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* 1 Cor. iii. 3. Your dignity is high, as so near the Lord of glory, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, Heb. vii. 26. it will therefore become you to look with disdain and detestation upon all sin, as most unworthy your relation to such a head, and most unsuitable to it. Often put yourselves in mind to whom you belong; and as you have no reason to be ashamed of Christ, carry about with you a watchful care that you be not a shame to him: and where your danger is greatest, double your guard.

As chosen and call'd out of the world into the Redeemer's kingdom, study his word, learn his precepts, observe his ordinances, believe his promises, and under the conduct of his spirit follow his example, and so trust your souls in his hand as his ransom'd ones. Let the life you live in the flesh, be by the faith of the son of God, Gal. ii. 20. Run with patience and perseverance the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, Heb. xii. 1, 2. in whom you have both righteousness and strength, and always reason to rest and rejoice, Isa xlv. 24, 25.

Provision is made that they that are in Christ shall also abide, 1 John ii. 27. but we are to exhort you that with purpose of heart ye would cleave
unto

unto the Lord, Acts xi. 23. This is your duty ; for encouragement to which, help is lodged in your living head, that you may be strong in the grace that is in him, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Union to Christ is good for every thing, and is to be improved to your stability and growth. Our apostle brings it in at every turn, upon every occasion, and this amongst the rest, *Wherefore as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him ; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*, Col. ii. 6, 7. If nominal branches wither or are taken away, evidence by your fruitfulness, that your being in Christ is vital, and your preservation shall be sure. 'Tis possible many that were called and counted Christ's disciples, and for a time followed him, may fall back and walk no more with him, John vi. 66. But instead of being thereby stagger'd, let this be the use you make of it, to cleave the faster, and watch, and pray, and depend the more : and then if the question be put, *will ye also go away ?* Answer with Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life*, ver. 67, 68. As tending to this, you know his command and promise to every one of his members, which you are often to read for caution and comfort, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10.

Lastly, *Belonging to Christ by vital union, love his appearing, and live and die expecting your heaven in being with him.* Head and members shall assuredly be together, to mutual satisfaction, and the highest never-ending joy. You shall be
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with Christ as to your souls at death ; and as to soul and body at that day, *when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*, and from thence forward to all eternity. Believe him *heard* and to be answered in his dying requests for *all that the Father hath given him*, John xvii. 15. that, during their stay in this world, he would keep them from the evil ; and, with reference to an after-state, that they might follow him in their turn, and *be with him where he is, to behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. In whatever instance or degree your blessedness is for a while reserved, the time of Christ's coming, will be a *time of refreshing, blotting out your sins*, and letting you into the *joy of your Lord*, Acts iii. 19. And as secured of this, look thro' death and the grave, and every unpleasing thing that goes before or comes between, and *lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh*, Luke xxi. 28. *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry* beyond the appointed season, Heb. x. 37. And tho' you yet see him not, your felicity is real and safe : *Your life is hid with Christ in God : and when Christ who is our life shall appear ; then shall he also appear with him in glory*, Col. iii. 3, 4.

THE

T H E M E T H O D.

BEing in Christ, spoken of by the apostle Paul, with the greatest frequency and delight, as the sum and measure of a christian's felicity.

The text an instance of this, expressive of his inward high esteem of their privilege, who, as to this, had the start of him, and were sooner brought into so desirable a state.

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7 AP 53

The

The Dangerous Deceitfulness of
S I N.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D TO
Y O U N G P E O P L E.



The P R E F A C E.

To *Young People*: particularly the *Society* of such,
belonging to the *Lecture* in *Lime-street*, *London*.

Dearlly Beloved,

IT has long been a true, tho' a very awful observation,
that *most that are converted at all, are converted young.*

Few that grow old in wickedness are then recovered and brought home to Christ. Not that *aged sinners* are left to * *despair*; but it ought to be a warning to the *youngest* never to give way to sin, or put off repentance, as if either of them could be done with safety, *these* being the *steps* that prove fatal to the *most* that perish under the gospel.

The consideration of this led me to the awakening subject here handled, as a suitable ground from whence to lay out your danger, and point to the means of your preservation: may the divine Spirit keep alive or recover the serious impressions that in the delivery seem'd to be made, and fix the pious resolutions which any soul in the reading may begin to take up.

As a *society* form'd for *religious purposes*, the *text* contains your proper work, under the most powerful motive to it: and

* *Vid. Serm. Stil'd, The door of hope yet open.*

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was I to speak to the many *bodies* of the like nature, supporting or attending the various *lectures* in and about this *great city*, or any where worshipping God in the same *communion*, I know not what I could say to each, with reference to their *respective members*, more necessary or seasonable than this; *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

For you, to whom I here apply, let *holiness to the Lord* be your general inscription, *Zach. xiv. 20.* and endeavour to promote it as to every *individual*; *looking diligently lest any of you fail of the grace of God, Heb. xii. 15.* and that no place for sin be found among you, that *abominable thing* which he declares he *hates*, and strictly *forbids*, *Jer. lxiv. 4.* that in imitation of him, and obedience to him, you may also abhor, and stand at the greatest distance from. Apprehend the *apostle* had just ground for his injunction, *abstain from all appearance of evil, 1 Thess. v. 22.* and rather stop short than go to the utmost bounds of what is lawful, as from thence there is but an easy step into what is *forbidden*. Be upon your guard against the workings of corruption within, and the numberless temptations to which you are liable from without; and believe you can at no time grow secure, without giving your *adversary the Devil* an advantage against you, who, *as a roaring lion, continually goeth about seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8.* Blessed be God, that has not left us *ignorant of his devices, 2 Cor. ii. 11.*

And while you are watching over *yourselves*, and have so much reason for it; forget not the duty that you owe to *one another*. Let love to God and souls inspire you with a tender concern for *his glory*, and your *common salvation*, and shew it by mutual care to preserve or rescue each other from the *deceitfulness of sin*: you know whither it tends.

As you are professedly designing for heaven, be solicitous that none of your company miscarry or *seem to come short, Heb. iv. 1.* Make it evident that the promise has taken effect upon you, in its gospel-sense, *they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, Jer. l. 5.* And if your course and progress be answerable, how entertaining will be the sight? 'Twill before-hand occasion joy in heaven that there are so many a coming, that have agreed to walk in company thither, and so are *pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii.*

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14. As often as the stated season returns for your publick attending divine institutions, with what pleasure may you say to one another, *Come, let us go to the House of God*, Psal. cxxii. 1. to pray, and hear, and worship together now, when you can do it under the *view* and *hope* of meeting at length before the *throne*, to be united in the same praises and joy for ever.

As a *society of younger persons*, apprehend yourselves especially concerned, to take all occasions, to engage and fix each other for God and holiness, against the *deceitfulness of sin* in all its forms. Now is the *time* of your greatest danger, and of Satan's greatest *hopes*, and all you can do is no more than necessary to your common safety.

The Devil has his Agents endeavouring to propagate sin and ruin souls, and their principal designs and attempts are upon young persons, as in the *ductile age*. To such therefore Christ particularly calls by way of charge, *My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, Prov. i. 10. 'Tis not doubted but there will be multitudes to entice to that which is evil; and this by all the arts of address and insinuation that may be like to move; and why should any be more forward to destroy, than you to save one another? If the *children of the wicked One* have so much of the nature of their *infernal Father*, as after his example, to seek to draw others to *hell* with them; with what zeal should the *followers of Christ* set themselves to counter-act the *serpent's seed*, and help on one another in the way to *heaven*.

Your labour of love, as to this, you have no reason to think shall be forgotten or lost. There has been a time when *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him*, Mal. iii. 16, 17. And how encouraging is it to have it added as to such, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels*. In the hope of this, as you profess to *fear the Lord* in your youth, act as such: be not ashamed to speak of and for him to one another, to mutual influence and comfort in your walk with him.

In a sense of the *deceitful working* and *dreadful tendency* of sin, will you not, every one for himself, from this time, cry unto God, *My father, thou art the guide of my youth?* Jer. iii. 4. And having thus chosen him to be so, keep his way, and avoid the contrary, and never admit the thought

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of a change. As 'tis perseverance that carries the crown, dread nothing more than after having begun in the spirit, to end in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3.

Remember, your common proneness to backslide, and what evil may be prevented by seasonable counsel and mutual help. If any, after having set out well, should begin to decline, how easily at first may he be restored? But without timely warning, how far may he run? How difficult and doubtful may his recovery prove? How certain, and deep, and unexpressible his misery, if never reduc'd? And what should you not be willing to do, that this may never be the case of any among you?

On the other hand, having your own hearts right with God, what good may you do by duly assisting each other to walk in holiness and righteousness before him? The way of holiness is the way to heaven, and by contributing in your youth to one anothers steadiness and perseverance therein, against the special temptations of your place and day, what honour will you bring to God? What credit to the gospel? What advantage to others and to your own souls? How much a blessing will your society be on earth? And with what joy may you hear and find at last, that you helped to fill heaven? Of how great use and influence may your example prove? With what a lustre will you shine? What happy attainments will you be like to reach, in the things that accompany salvation? And by growing grace preparatory to greater glory, appear to be some of those whom the Most High is forming for himself, in both worlds to shew forth his praise, Isa. lxiii. 21.

Wherefore, as you regard the glory of God, the interest of the Redeemer, in opposition to sin and Satan, the encouragement of your ministers, the highest welfare of your society, and of every one belonging to it; as you desire to see religion flourish while you live, and would provide for a peaceful death, a comfortable account, and so an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord, Exhort one another.

Do this with meekness and wisdom, with faithfulness and affection, with seriousness, diligence and perseverance; daily, while it called to day. Often think that you are a dying, and so are they you are related to, and that there is such a thing as being hardened in sin: and under the apprehensions of both, whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge

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knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither you are going, Eccl. ix. 10.

'Tis a degree of guilt silently to suffer sin on your brother, *Levit. xix. 17.* if fallen, make haste to *save him with fear.* The blessed opportunity *will* soon be over, and *may,* much sooner than you are aware, when there will be no room for counsel, or little likelihood of doing any good. You can call no time your own, but the present. There is no necessary connexion between your flying moments: under a conviction of which, make it a rule to yourselves, in the concerns of souls, and upon the brink of eternity, *what you may and ought to do to-day,* not to put off till *to-morrow,* which you may never see. *For what is your life, it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,* Jam. iv. 14.

The importance of the duty I have been pleading for, has drawn me beyond the common bounds of a *preface* to a *sermon.* For a close, I desire to repeat the caution, and leave it with conscience: as you would manifest a real concern for the welfare of any *other,* be not negligent of your *own.* To say, *Am I my brother's keeper?* Gen. iv. 9. is the language of a *Cainite*; and to be busy and seemingly earnest *abroad,* and cold and careless in looking *home* or *within,* is the temper and mark of an *hypocrite.* In exhorting *others,* always remember that sin is equally an enemy to *your own souls,* and accordingly begin your opposition at the right end, and let the war be everlasting. Never give out, or admit the thought of making peace with that which means your destruction: in every soul that would live for ever, sin must die.

For particular directions, I refer you to the *sermon:* and as you are called not only to hear or read, but to act; *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all grace, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthen'd with might by his spirit in the inner man,* Eph. iii. 14, 16. and so succeed what is offer'd to the disappointing the *dangerous deceitfulness of sin,* and securing the reader's eternal salvation. *Amen.*

D. WILCOX.

H E B R E W S iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be harden'd thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

THE design of the *apostle* in this chapter, as in a great part of the *epistle*, is to fix the *Hebrews* in their *christian profession*, and arm them against apostacy. He knew the danger they were in, and from whence it came, and suits his directions to the circumstances of their case.

The twelfth verse is a solemn warning, which all that *name the name of Christ* should read with application: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* To prevent this, and keep them safe, the *text* comes in, pointing to their proper work: *But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.*

In which words we have,

1. *A duty injoin'd; exhort one another.* Let every one in his proper place do what he can for his *brother's soul*; which supposes that we begin at home, and have a just concern for our *own*.

2. *The manner of performing it, viz. with frequency and earnestness: daily, while it is called to day.*

3. *The motive to inforce this; lest any of you you be harden'd, thro' the deceitfulness of sin.* You can't

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can't too soon oppose it *yourselves*, or warn *others*. There's no safety in having any thing to do with it. 'Tis all deceit in its appearance, obduracy in the practice, destruction in the issue. The hazard is great of the least indulgence, whatever the pretence be, the repetition may prove fatal: Wherefore, *exhort one another daily, while it is called to day*, lest any of you be harden'd thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

'Tis this last clause, to which I shall confine my discourse, and accordingly shew,

I. *How sin is to be taken as said to be deceitful, and wherein its deceitfulness lies.*

II. *The power of that deceitfulness, by which it works.*

III. *What hardness it leads to as matter of fear: Which will make way for a serious application.*

I. *How sin is to be taken as said to be deceitful.*

Such a title belongs to sin.

Both { With reference to the external practice,
the vicious object and act,
and,
As to indwelling corruption, with its various workings.

I. With reference to the *external object* and *act* about it, sin's deceitfulness lies in *false appearances*, and *delusive promises*; in both disappointing the expectation of those that venture upon it.

In its native *blackness*, as a violation of the law of God, provoking his wrath, and drawing after it an everlasting hell; 'tis too frightful to be the object of the sinner's choice. This is not unknown

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known to the grand *destroyer*, who therefore endeavours to hide its deformity and sting, and paint it with the fairest colours, the more strongly to tempt. Thus the *beguil'd*, unwary *Eve*, who ventur'd to eat of the *forbidden fruit*, in hope of impunity and gain, upon the serpent's suggesting both, even where God had threatened death. *When she saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and her husband with her, Gen. iii. 6.* from whence our misery springs: and 'tis under a like delusion, that their posterity are still ensnar'd.

In this sense, *sin*, like the *father* of it, may be said to be a *lyar from the beginning*. It allures with the specious prospect of riches, but robs us of our best treasure; flatters with hopes of honour or pleasure, but rewards with disgrace and torment; tempts with liberty, but binds in chains; makes fair proposals of an imaginary felicity, but betrays to endless destruction, unfeigned misery: the paths it would have us tread, seem all strew'd with flowers of profit, dignity or delight; and hence appear *right* and eligible in the *finner's eyes*, 'till the *end* prove them the *ways of death*, Prov. xvi. 25. But this is not all the deceitfulness of sin.

2. *As to indwelling corruption*, who can tell the many ways it has to deceive and destroy? Sin here, is the *man sinful*, proving a tempter to himself. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? Rev. xvii. 9.* Lust having conceived, is restless in its motions, till it *bring forth sin*, and that *finished*, draws death after it, *Jam. i. 19.*

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The deceitfulness of sin, in this last notion, is considerable as to the method used,

In { *inticing to what is evil, and then*
 { *confirming in it.*

(1.) *In inticing to it*: What pains does the sinner take to justify, or extenuate the evil he is bent upon? desirous by a deceitful varnish, to take off from its horrid appearance, that it may give as little disturbance to conscience as possible. All endeavours are us'd, not only to *colour* the object, but to *corrupt* the eye by a disguising tincture, that the sight of things may not be according to *truth*, but according to his *desire*.

To this end most vices are accommodated with *softer names*, whereby sinners willingly impose upon themselves; and calling *evil, good*, venture upon it with less hesitation or concern; as if the disguised *poison* would be the less deadly, because taken down under the notion of a *cordial*; or, as if God would be as easily deceived as they.

If sin must be called by its *own name*, how many pleas are ready to lessen its guilt, and make it seem as none? Excuses are fetch'd from the person, circumstances, manner and design of yielding, to smoothe the way, and draw on the yet unpractic'd mind.

The Devil seems *modest* in his first *temptations*, and his inbred correspondent soon takes the hint and pleads, as *Lot for Zoar, Is it not a little one, and my Soul shall live?* Gen. xix. 20. Or, as *Naaman's* servant to bring him to yield to the prophet's advice, *'Tis no great matter is requir'd,* 2 Kings v. 13. "What if for *once* I take my liberty in *this* or the *other* instance, in compliance

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“pliance with *youthful inclinations*, the *bent* of
 “my *nature*, the *importunity* and *example* of
 “others, or the *unavoidable temptations* of my
 “place and state? What if I yield *so far*, whilst
 “I stop short of that *excess* which others run
 “into?” As if he that enters upon any way of
 wickedness, was not as a man going to wade a
shelving deep, where after a step or two, he is in
 danger of being beyond his length, past recovery;
 or as one that will set himself a running down a
 hill, unable easily to make a stand.

’Tis natural for *one sin*, like some colours, to dis-
 pose for *others* to be *more easily* received, and with
 a deeper dye. How great a flame hath been
 kindled by a little spark? The divine law re-
 quires *universal* obedience; and he that pre-
 sumptuously *offends* in *one point*, is said to be
guilty of all, Jam. ii. 10. as he despises the au-
 thority upon which every command is founded,
 and is prepared to do it to all the rest. *The wages*
of every sin is death: this the least indulg’d and
 allow’d, without repentance, as surely leads to
 as the *greatest*. And what poor relief will it be
 in hell, to think, “I did not follow my compa-
 “nions the shortest way, or by *equal strides*,”
 when I find myself in the same place of torment,
 as *truly* damn’d as they. And tho’ *some* shall have
 a *forer degree* of punishment than others, they
 that suffer *least* under the *worm that never dies*,
 and *where the fire is not quenched*, will be com-
 pletly miserable. But whatever be the conse-
 quence, any thing is welcome that favours the
 sinner’s corrupt inclinations, or seems to palliate
 and excuse, what by an inward bias, he is car-
 ried

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ried to. Thus the *foolish heart is darkened*, objections are slighted or broken thro', scruples conquer'd, unwarrantable desires rais'd, and thereupon the forbidden fruit is tasted, the tempter gratified, the soul ensnared, and like to be for ever lost: for whom it has once enticed into the broad way, sin is no less deceitful,

(2.) *In confirming in it*; drawing on its servants even to *final obduracy* and destruction.

To this end *false libertine principles* are admitted, or perverse inference drawn from *true* ones: the scriptures are wrested and abused as to their merciful discoveries, precious promises, instances of grace abounding to the *chief of sinners*, &c. and arguments fetch'd from all, whereby sinners encourage themselves to *walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes*, Eccl. xi. 9. to *add sin to sin*, in confidence of safety, till death meet them in their wild career, and put an end to their life and hope together.

The heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. viii. 11. and having once drawn us to the commission of sin, by modest pretensions, *because it was small, or as we had not done it before*; it will hence plead more strongly for repeated acts, or * *higher degrees, because it is the same, or but little else than we have done already*, or others before us, who yet have come off safe; and we may go as far, and escape as well as they. Thus by a wisdom from beneath, deceitful sin is training on to destruction; and how sad is it to see so many taken and held

* *In a sense of this, a heathen could say, Stulta res est nequitiae modus. Sen. 'Tis folly for any to purpose to sin with moderation.*

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its willing captives, securely going down to the chambers of death. This brings us to consider,

II. *The power and prevalency of the deceitfulness that belongs to sin.*

In our times, if ever, 'tis lamentably visible, considering the light and means enjoy'd, the arguments used, the methods taken by God and man to reclaim a licentious age, reduce sinners to their wits, and the little success or fruit of all.

What therefore I shall say under this head, shall be for conviction as well as proof, to awaken, shame and humble the unhappy instances of this, in order to their recovery; and put others upon watching that they be not taken in the same snare.

I. *How strangely powerful is the deceitfulness of sin, with reference to the many who love, and live therein, tho' they are told of its present deceit, and destructive issue?* How little they will get by it, and what they will lose; and without a timely retreat, must for ever suffer. *He that sinneth against me, saith Wisdom, personating Christ, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.* Hate the Lord of life and glory! How amazing does it sound! And yet how plainly is it true of all that prefer their sins before their Saviour, and refuse to turn from them, and give up themselves to him, to be, and live as his redeemed ones? who will not hearken to his voice, nor walk in his ways, nor obey his commands, nor renounce their lusts, by whatever arguments urg'd in the gospel: but by this their rebellion against him, how do they wrong their own souls? Deprive them of the endless happiness, which, as the purchase

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purchase of his blood, he offers to them; and betray them to everlasting misery, from which they are exhorted to flee, by forsaking *sin*, as to its love and practice, which now only can prove their ruin; but they think the *terms* hard, and death more eligible, and are resolv'd for hell. Powerful charm! that can make men fond of destruction, and hate their best friend; despise their happiness, and court their misery, and break thro' all restraints to it.

'Tis an affecting instance of sin's power on * him, who being advised by his physicians, to cease his debaucheries, or he would lose his sight, could readily reply, † “ If I can't enjoy my lusts “ and eye-sight too, as pleasant as it is, I'm resolv'd to be blind.” But how much farther enslav'd do many prove themselves upon the same account? Who when they have *life* and *death* set before them, and are told the way that leads to the one and the other, for the sake of a base lust, turn their backs on holiness and heaven, and madly leap into the bottomless pit.

If it be said, 'tis not their misery that sinners formally choose, but the present felicity or satisfaction they are flatter'd with; and being wholly taken up in the pursuit of these, forget, or disregard the dreadful consequence: hence I add,

2. *How powerful is the deceitfulness of sin, that can persuade men that are made for another world, to look no farther than this; and so seek for happiness, where 'tis never to be found, or call that so, that's bounded by sense and time, as if they had*

* *Philotimus.*

† *Valeat lumen amicam.*

nothing

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nothing higher to mind. What a reproach is it to such to be called *rational creatures*, who are so far become *like the beasts that perish*, as to be wholly confin'd to present enjoyments; and having immortal souls, put them to no other use, than to *make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts*? And thus pursue a *shadow* in the way to hell, without looking before them; and for a superficial, short-liv'd pleasure, *securely* sink into everlasting torment.

3. *How powerful is the deceitfulness of sin, as to the numbers over whom it still reigns, though all its servants sooner or later confess the delusion?* That they mis'd of their vainly-expected satisfaction, and courted *real misery*, under a *deceitful appearance*: that the felicity promised, prov'd all *dream and disappointment*, and they had no pleasure in it worthy of the rational nature: that all its delights were dreggy, superficial, vanishing, mix'd; at best, but like the book St. *John* was bid to eat, *sweet* for a little while in the *mouth*, but bitter in the *belly*, Rev. x. 9.

All that have given into the deceitfulness of sin, thus agree in their testimony, that it has been to their cost: and yet of how little force is it with those that come after, to stop or turn them from the same course.

I have no occasion here to refer to the complaints of those who are gone down to the burning lake, which some are ready to question, because their sufferings are not open to view, tho' he who is acquainted with all, tells us of their *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth*, Matth. iii. as sensible of the *deceitfulness* of sin

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to their everlasting sorrow; and could they return to earth, with flaming tongues would they tell their fellow-sinners of the dreadful *place of torment* they are going to: but this is not allow'd, nor is there need.

Besides the lamentations which they vent below, there *have been, and are, multitudes* on earth, experimentally to witness to the *deceitfulness of sin*: *saints*, having their eyes open by grace; *sinners*, on their dying-beds awaken'd thro' fear; both reflect with deep *remorse*, tho' not of the same kind, on their former ways.

The apostle puts the question to the converted *Romans*, with reference to their former state, *what fruit had ye then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 21. In the time when you were wholly devoted to sin; sought satisfaction in an unrestrained indulging your lusts; took the largest liberty to gratify and please your appetite and senses, did it really yield the desired fruit? Can you reflect with comfort on what you got or laid up in your once esteem'd pleasant days? or rather, must you not speak out and freely tell deluded sinners, who are *wearying themselves in the greatness of their way*, that what they are so much set upon, you have found an empty, cheating thing? That you got nothing in the days of your *vanity*, but what now yields you *vexation*; is matter of shame and sorrow in the bitter remembrance.

And how frequent are the complaints of sinners to the same purpose? If not before, yet when on a dying-bed reduc'd to their senses, how do they cry out of sin's *deceitfulness*, and their

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own folly? "Oh! the *delusive happiness* I have
 "been pursuing! Pursu'd so far, as to lose sight
 "and hope of that which is *real*. For what a
 "meer nothing have I spent my time, wasted
 "my body, sold heaven, and ventur'd upon an
 "everlasting hell, to which I am now going?"
 But notwithstanding this, what multitudes are
 intic'd the same way, against the testimony of
 others, and even against their own convictions?

May I not appeal to *sinners themselves*, as to
 their delusion and disappointment? Whatever
 they promised themselves in the commission of
 sin, as to pleasure or advantage, how soon have
 they found that they grasp'd at a shadow, em-
 brac'd a cloud? All vanish'd in the enjoyment,
 that appear'd so big in the eager pursuit: upon
 which, something within might be heard to say,
 with regret; "Is this the great nothing, I was
 "so mad after? this the empty delight I have
 "wearied myself for?" And yet how often
 does the sinner, being intic'd again, again con-
 sent? Forget the delusion, and still hold on, and
 where is like to be the end? *He feedeth of ashes*
under the appearance of dainties; a deceived
heart turning him aside, that he cannot deliver his
soul, nor say, Is there not a lye in my right hand?
 Isa. xlv. 20. This leads us to shew,

III. *What hardness this tends to as matter of*
fear and flight.

Hardness in its *natural notion*, as respecting
 material substances, every body knows to be that
 property whereby they withstand, and will not
 easily give way to the touch. Hence in a *moral*
sense, as spoken of the *heart* in man, 'tis us'd to
 signify

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signify that stupid, insensible, obstinate temper of spirit, whereby sinners are arm'd against any good impressions to be made upon them: *that*, whereby they are averse to good, inclin'd to evil, and difficultly yield to the methods us'd to work a change.

With this unhappy temper, in a sad degree, we are all born into the world, as a fruit of the *primitive apostacy*, and the corruption that cleaves to us from thence. A *stone* in the *heart*, is our natural disease, and early manifests too great resistance against the means of cure.

But there is farther a twofold *hardness* to which sin leads;

namely, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{habitual} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{judicial.} \end{array} \right.$

1. *Habitual*. This is the result of foregoing transgression, or repeated acts of sin, strengthening the natural depravity, and confirming in it. Hereby the sinner is imbolden'd in his way, and becomes a stranger to much of that shame and sorrow, reluctancy and remorse, which he was sometimes wont to feel.

Tho' by natural corruption the heart is early prone and inclin'd to sin, it can't be freely indulg'd *at first*, without the checks and rebukes of the sinner's own mind, especially in such as have had a good education, and their light increased by acquaintance with the *bible*, and sitting under the ministry of the word.

Even in such as are unrenewed, when a temptation is offer'd, a conflict is felt between conscience and corruption, and much depends upon

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the issue, on which side the victory falls. Conscience inlighten'd endeavours to restrain from sin by pulling off its mask, bidding me view it in its native blackness, and dreadful consequence; and if I hearken to its voice, and call in the assistance of grace, I am safe: on the other side, the carnal heart pleads hard for indulgence under some plausible disguise; and if I suffer myself to be overcome, and give into the deceit, I am hence prepared to do it a *second time*, and so on, 'till custom in sinning has taken away the sense of it, and the heart becomes as the highway.

Vicious inclinations having made their way through our fears and scruples, grow more impetuous, and more likely to prevail another time; whilst conscience violated, is weakened and wasted, and so its voice grows lower, or its warnings *before*, and lashes *after* the commission of sin, are less regarded; convictions by degrees are stifled and quench'd, and sinners insensibly slide into that stupidity, by which they become past feeling: and the next step is to *give themselves over to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness*, Eph. iv. 4, 19.

And being come this length, as *insensible*, they often prove *inflexible* too; so wedded to their lusts as not to admit a divorce. Hence, tho' the law thunders, they will not stir; tho' the gospel allures, they will not move; the eternal God calls to them, but they will not hearken; the Redeemer invites, but they will not come; the Spirit strives, but they still resist; whilst patience waits, they grow more wanton, and make their sins to *abound*, because grace does so. Thus

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from *bearkening to the counsel of the ungodly*, they by degrees get up to the *scorner's chair*, Ps. i. where from principles of *atheism* and *infidelity*, they contemn the *threatnings* of the bible, and the *promises* both, that they may not be brought to obey the *commands*. This is the *habitual hardness* sin leads to, which makes way for that which is,

2. *Judicial*, or inflicted from heaven.

If any will harden themselves, God, for their wilful disobedience may punish them with the same: not by infusing evil into them, or *impelling*, or turning them loose to sin, as what he could ever approve. We are not to admit such a thought without abhorrence, as inconsistent with the spotless purity of the *divine nature*. *Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*, Jam. i. 13. But without imputation, God may be said to harden, by withdrawing from obstinate sinners the forfeited restraints of his providence and grace: forbearing to *hedge up their way with thorns*, or making a *wall* to keep them from *finding their destructive paths*, Hof. ii. 6. When they break over all bounds, he may say of them that are *filthy*, and hate to be reformed, *let them be filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. When they rebel against the *light*, perversely calling *evil good*, and *good evil*; and in their stated course prefer sin to holiness, he may give them over to a * *reprobate mind*, incapable of making a better choice: when they continue to *resist the Holy Ghost* in his kind design, God

* *Ἀδόκιμος* injudicious, unteachable. Rom. i. 28.

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may resolve that he *shall not always strive with them*, as he has done, *Gen. vi. 3.* In a word, when they say to the Almighty, *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, *Job xxi. 14.* when they *will not hearken to his voice*, nor be won by his grace; when they will have none of him, nothing to do with him, but choose to live as *without God in the world*; he may be provok'd to say, *let them alone*, *Hos. iv. 17.* and so give them up to their own hearts lusts to walk in their own counsels, according to their choice, *Pf. lxxxix. 12.* And what more fearful judgment can be conceived on this side hell? Whither will not a deceived heart, under the sway of impetuous lusts, lead that man, who is thus forsaken and given up of God! Who, without trembling, can think of the sinner's present work, and in case he hold on in it, how dreadful e'er long will be his end. While eagerly filling up the measure of his sins, he is fitting himself as fast for destruction, of which, of all men living, he is in the greatest in danger, as that terrible *threatning* stands pointed to him, *he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*, *Prov. xxix. 1.*

What remains is the *application* for instruction and practice.

1. *Hence learn the reason of that mighty storm that is ordinarily felt in the breasts of true penitents upon their first becoming such.* When with the *prodigal*, they come to themselves, *Luk. xv. 17.* and seriously consider how little sin ever did or could do for them; what it would have depriv'd them of, and in the issue betray'd them to; how long

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long they yielded themselves its willing slaves, and were led captive by it, and how near they were to final ruin.—What shame and sorrow, what abhorrence and remorse, what indignation and revenge are kindled in them?

They freely own themselves *out of their wits*, whilst *serving divers lusts and pleasures*, Tit. iii. 3. and feel the keenest pain in thinking over their past course. Oh, the madness! the exceeding madness! of hearkening to the *enticements* of sin and sinners, and for momentary, sensual gratifications, to lay my soul at stake, and run it into the utmost danger of perishing for ever. *Lord, how foolish was I and ignorant? I was as a beast before thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 22.

They that set out with the highest expectations, in any way of wickedness, will shortly be brought to this by timely repentance on earth, or more furiously tear themselves in the *place of torment*, when too late convinc'd of the fatal delusion.

2. *How adorable is the grace of God, as to all that get safe to heaven; what joy will there be upon their arrival?*

How is it, will every one say, that from heaven looks back upon the way he has been led; how is it, that I should be kept from being entangled, or timely rescu'd from the snares of death, when so strongly inticed, so powerfully drawn, so ready to yield, to be overcome, harden'd and lost? That grace should interpose for my security, and in the most endearing manner restrain, recover and preserve me to glory.----- With what transport will this be recounted by the *ransom'd of the Lord*, when taken up to him,

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as matter that will help to feed their wonder and praise for ever.

3. *It need not seem strange, that holy men are afraid of nothing so much as sin, and can't allow themselves to follow a multitude to do evil, Exod. xxiii. 2. it being too dear a compliment to be paid to any, to run the hazard of being hardened first, and so of perishing for company.* And whatever scorn or violence they hereby incur, their courage and constancy are abundantly justifiable, in choosing affliction rather than sin; not *fearing* any evil in the power of man, in comparison of the wrath of God; nor *accepting deliverance* from bodily sufferings, when it can't be had but on sinful compliances, to the greater wrong and danger of the soul.

4. *How dangerous is their mistake, who whilst under the power of sin, think their case good, because their consciences are quiet?* And with how many is it thus?

The sin that once filled them with horror, they no longer feel or bewail; not that their guilt is removed, but because their sense is lost: and hereupon they *blest themselves in their hearts*, and cry *peace and safety*, when *sudden destruction is coming upon them*, 1 Thess. v. 3. for *there is no peace, saith God, unto the wicked*, Isa. lvii.

Such stupidity, fastens the sinner in Satan's *snare*, and is more to be dreaded than the greatest trouble in the world: and indeed the *false peace* sinners are apt to nourish, must e'er long be broken and *exchang'd* for deep and serious *sorrow*, preparatory to rest and joy upon a better bottom; or if it never come to this, what sight
can

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can we figure to ourselves more sad and afflicting, than of an harden'd creature going out of the world *quiet and secure*, that must the next moment be swallowed up of *everlasting despair*. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God taketh away his soul!* Job xxvii. 8.

5. *How great is our advantage in having the bible, and living under the gospel?* By which we are warn'd of *sin's deceitfulness*, and armed against it; told what is sin, and our danger by it, and whether it tends; and have proper remedies provided for our security. Be thankful to God for *the word of his lips*, whereby you may escape *the path of the destroyer*; and for any the most grievous providence or affliction, that he makes use of to seal instruction. When going astray, this is his voice in his word, *remove thy foot from evil*, Prov. iv. 27. and kind is that *rod*, how sharp soever, by which he brings us to hearken and return, and so prevents our being *harden'd* and lost.

6. *How desirable is the state of such as are in covenant with God*, having chosen him in Christ for *theirs*, and given up themselves unto him. They are hereby become his special charge, as well as his peculiar delight, and shall never perish by being deceived, or pluck'd out of his hand.

Heaven is the place they are ordained and redeemed to, are preparing for, have a special promise of; and hence shall be preserved from whatever would prove a bar to their admission there, as a state of final impenitency would do. Wherefore how great soever be the *deceitfulness*
of

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of sin, in opposition to it, the *grace* of Christ shall be *sufficient* for them. By this they shall be enabled to stand their ground, or if they fall be renewed again to repentance, made more humble and watchful, and in strength deriv'd from their living head, assuredly overcome and carry the crown. God who is of unerring wisdom, almighty power, unquestionable faithfulness, and unchangeable love, is *their God for ever and ever*, which infers their safe conduct thro' this world, in order to their perfect blessedness in another.

7. Is the case so sad of being *harden'd in sin*? *Let the dread of this awaken a present and perpetual opposition to it* in every one that would be safe.

I would especially urge this on the younger sort. Now, in the prime of your days, *fly youthful lusts that war against the soul*, 2 Tim. ii. 22. and let no sin be admitted under the most favourable disguise, its method being thus to *deceive*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. in order to destroy.

Such as have engag'd in any way of wickedness, should hence be struck with fear, and proceed no farther, lest they become instances of the harden'd, deplorable state to which it leads: you who have been hitherto under merciful restraints, thankfully acknowledge the goodness of God, and beware of every thing that tends to forfeit his protection. Remember the worth of a soul, and how inexcusable it would be to betray it yourselves, by taking a serpent into your bosom for its pleasing colours, when you are so plainly told of its mortal sting. Consider where
your

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your danger and sin's power lies, and improve all the means the gospel furnishes to your preservation. For your help herein, let me mention a few things by way of counsel and direction, and therewith close.

1. *Begin at the root*: see that corruption, as to its power and reign, be mortified within. Get by faith into union to Christ, that you may be made partakers of his spirit to dwell and abide in you, to enable you to *put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts*, and whereby you may be *renewed in the spirit of your minds*, and so *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv.

22. Without this, we cannot be safe. Tho' gospel light and knowledge may work an external reformation, and restrain for a time from grosser pollutions, nothing short of a *divine nature* can be of constant security against the *deceitfulness of sin*, or set us out of danger of its hardening influence, and the dreadful issue to which it leads.

2. *Let conscience be well instructed from the word of God, and charge it to be faithful, and and hearken to its voice*. Take heed of rebelling against the light. Wilful sinning, makes sad havock in the soul, and is the high-way to obduracy and destruction.

Value the blessing of a tender conscience as to the least sin. Indeed think no sin little. Consider how great a God it is committed against, what an endless hell it lays open to, and without repentance, and an interest in the blood of Jesus, will assuredly fix the sinner in; and under this

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view, let the first motion or solicitation thereto be rejected with abhorrence, and speedily quench'd: avoid the company of those *fools who make a mock of it*, Prov. xiv. 9.

3. *Beware of running upon temptation in a vain presumption you may come off safe.* Your strength lies not in your selves, but must come from heaven; and you have no promise of protection out of God's way. He may justly leave you, if you leave him, and venturing to try conclusions on the weak supports of nature, 'tis more than probable you are overcome. *Happy is the man that feareth always*, Prov. xxviii. 14.

4. *Keep the cross of Christ as much as possible in view, and remember 'twas sin that nailed him to it.* He was cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26. *he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities*, Isa. liii. 5. And while thinking of his bitter sufferings, his dying love, what heart can you have to venture upon that which cost your dear Redeemer his Life? When in the greatest danger from the *deceitfulness of sin*, a serious look at a *crucify'd Jesus*, would be of use to break the powerful charm, and keep you safe. What veil can hide its horrid aspect, or render it tolerable, to one that reads by faith its nature and desert, in the wounds and blood, and death of Christ?

5. *Solemnly renew your covenant with God, and often reflect upon it with approbation*; that whenever tempted to sin, you may be able readily to answer, *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back*, Judg. xi. 35. *Thy vows are upon me, O God*, Ps. lvi. 12. *Truly I am thy servant,*

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want, I am thy servant devoted to thy fear, Ps. cxvi. 16. and I desire and resolve to be always so. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments, Ps. cxix. 106.

You that are in the vigour of your youth are entering upon the world, in an age of abounding wickedness, I would especially call upon to do this: make heart-work of it, and you can't too often and explicitly bind yourselves to be the Lord's; and having done so, rest not in *your promises* to him, but in *his* to you, in which your safety lies; and so *in well-doing, commit the keeping of your souls unto him, as unto a merciful and faithful Creator, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and yours,* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

6. *Live under an awful sense of God's presence with you, and plead it with yourselves, that you may act accordingly.*

How watchful am I concern'd to be? as always under the eye of God, which pierces into my thoughts and ways, and makes a strict observation of both; and this in order to an account hereafter to be given to him as my *final judge*. Shall I then dare to sin in the very face of heaven? would I not repel the temptation if I saw him present; and is he ever the less so, tho' not under the view of an eye of sense? How then *shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,* Gen. xxxvii. 9. Whilst he stands by, and takes notice of all, and *will not be mocked*, how willing soever I may be to be deceived.

7. *Frequently call yourselves to account:* That if you have been enabled to stand, you may thank God, and take comfort, relying upon his grace
for

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for the rest of your way; wherein you have fail'd, you may be sensible of your first declensions, and how occasion'd, and presently turn your feet *unto his testimonies*, more closely to walk with him.

The beginnings of sin may be most hopefully resisted; but like a slight disease, may prove dangerous in the neglect, and threaten death. As therefore you would avoid this, be not strangers to the work of examination, as to *heart and life*. The oftner you look into both, the better, in order to rectify what should be found amiss. More are undone, and in a worse sense, by neglecting to review their state and course, than by omitting to cast up their book: and thus, whilst they put off the search, sin gains upon them by insensible degrees to the ruin of their souls.

8. *Use yourselves to a life of self-denial, as to the flesh and the world:* and you will be in less danger of being drawn to sin, to gratify the one or gain the other. Sin's prevailing temptations are from the body and the objects of sense, but how little will *all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. signify to one who being in Christ, *bath crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 25. and can say, as the apostle, *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*, Gal. vi. 14. Its profits, pleasures and preferments, I can easily spare, and reject it all, as a dead, undesirable, hated thing, when offer'd to draw off my heart from God and holiness to vanity and sin.

9. *Keep up lively apprehensions of death and judgment approaching.*

Sin

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Sin has its greatest advantage over us as we forget our *latter end*, or set it at the greatest distance, and so growing secure, are easily beset, overcome, and what multitudes lost! Young persons especially, are in danger of this, from a presumption of many years to come: but how soon will life be over at longest? how uncertain is it at best? how near do we stand to eternity, and it may be much nearer than we imagine? Who can say any day, that he shall live till tomorrow, or not die before night? How many are snatch'd away of a sudden younger than ourselves? Now therefore, admit becoming serious thoughts of the change you are to make, you know not how soon, and of the eternity that is to follow; and who would by *sinning* when he is *dying*? Offending God when going to appear before him, to give an account of all that he has done in the body, and be adjudg'd to endless joy or misery. Improve the sickness and death of *others*, to impress the deeper sense of the nearness of your *own*; and in that sense stand at that distance from sin that becomes *persons* who are *waiting for their Lord*, Luke xii. 36.

Lastly, *Make your constant, serious application to heaven, for wisdom to discern, and grace to withstand the deceitfulness of sin.* Plead with the Almighty with an earnestness and concern suitable to your danger, "Lord, never leave me whilst
" in this world of snares. Suffer me not to be
" deceived, overcome, hardened and lost. Be
" thou my sun and my shield. Hold me by thy
" powerful arm; *guide me by thy counsel even*
" *unto death, and afterwards receive me to glory,*"
Psal.

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Pf. lxxiii. 24. Thus let your suit be continued till you come to heaven: you'll have constant reason for it while on this side; but *there* your salvation shall be perfected, fear and sin excluded, and prayer turned into everlasting praise to the author of all.

T H E M E T H O D.

The parts of the text mentioned, viz.

1. *A* Duty enjoin'd, exhort one another. page 104
2. *The manner of performance*, daily, while it is call-
ed, to-day.
3. *The motive to it*, lest any of you be hardened through
the deceitfulness of sin.
*This last clause the ground of the discourse; in opening of
which shewn,*
- I. Wherein the deceitfulness of sin consists.
This considered, 105
 1. *As to the external vicious object and act about it.*
 2. *As to corruption within: the deceitfulness of this dis-
covered.* 106
 - (1.) *In enticing to what is evil.* 107
 - (2.) *In confirming in it.* 109
- II. The power of sin's deceitfulness.
This seen, 110
 1. *In its prevailing over multitudes, notwithstanding fair
warning of its nature and tendency.*
 2. *In persuading men of rational, immortal souls, to act
after the manner of the beasts that perish.* 111
 3. *In continuing to seduce afresh against the testimony of
others, who have been ensnared to their cost, and even
against the conviction of sinners themselves.* 112
- III. The harden'd state to which the deceitfulness of sin has
a tendency to lead. 114
*A natural hardness suppos'd, as that which accompanies us
into the world.*
Besides this, thro' the deceitfulness of sin there may be,
 1. *A hardness that is habitual contracted.* 114
 - (2.) *That which is judicial incurr'd. The Sadness of this
intimidated to awaken a preventing fear.* 117
The

The M E T H O D.

The application.

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1. Ground enough for indignation against sin and themselves, in the breasts of true penitents, upon their first becoming such.
2. The grace of God. adorable, as to all that escape the deceitfulness of sin, and get safe to heaven. The highest joy will be excited upon their arrival there. 119
3. No wonder holy men are afraid of nothing so much as sin, and dare not follow a multitude to do evil, it being too dear a compliment to any, to run the hazard of being harden'd first, and so of going to hell for company. 120
4. Their mistake is dangerous, who under the power of sin, think their case good, because their consciences are quiet.
5. Great is our advantage in having the bible, and living under the gospel, by which we are warn'd of sin's deceitfulness, and arm'd against it. 121
6. Their state is more desirable who are in covenant with God, as they shall not be deceived, or pluck'd out of his hand.
7. The dangerous deceitfulness of sin should be a powerful motive to a present and perpetual opposition to it. 122

In order to this, several things added by way of direction, viz.

1. To begin at the root, and see that corruption be mortified within. 123
2. To get conscience well instructed from the word of God, and charge it to be faithful, and hearken to its voice.
3. To beware of running upon Temptation, in a vain presumption of coming off safe. 124
4. To keep the Cross of Christ in view, and remember it was sin that nailed him to it.
5. Such as have entered into covenant with God, often and solemnly to renew it, and put themselves in mind of the vows of the Lord upon their souls.
6. To maintain an awful sense of God's omnipresence. 125
7. Frequently to call themselves to an account.
8. To live a life of self-denial, as to the flesh and the world, which will abate the danger of being drawn to sin, to gratify the one or gain the other. 126
9. To keep up lively apprehensions of death and judgment approaching. 126

Lastly, Whilst on this side heaven, prayer constantly to be sent thither, for wisdom to discern, and grace to withstand the deceitfulness of sin. 127

The Door of Hope yet open.

A

S E R M O N

For the RELIEF of

Desponding Souls.

The E P I S T L E.

READER,

*T*HE following discourse was prepared for the use of souls in distress. Many such I meet with, who would gladly be delivered from the wrath to come, but upon attempting to make their escape, and enquiring what they should do to be saved? have their first steps discouraged by the powers of darkness.

Satan is ready to tell them, and they too ready to gratify him in concluding against themselves, that there is no hope in their case; they have stood out so long that the day of grace is past; or their sins are so many and great, so many ways aggravated, that no pardon or mercy is to be expected: whatever may be said of others, or time was of themselves, nothing is now left them but to despair and die.

To help them over these bars, and disappoint the grand enemy of souls; I have shewn the door of hope yet open, and that mercy may be had, for all that will close with the gospel-invitation.

This in the preaching has not been without success, which is thankfully acknowledged to the honour of that grace, which, whatever good is done, is to have all the glory.

To serve the purposes of that grace, 'tis now published, with my hearty prayer, that the divine blessing may still attend it, to the encouraging such as are ready to sink through fear of perishing, to put in for a share in the great and common salvation, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

D. W.

L U K E xiv. 22.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

TH E S E words are part of a parable, in which much of the mystery of the gospel is contain'd.

That which gave rise to it was *this*: one that sate at meat with Christ in the house of a Pharisee on the sabbath-day, hearing and being affected with the gracious words that drop'd from his lips, cries out, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*

Christ had been directing the *man of the house*, instead of inviting only the *rich* to a dinner or supper who might return the kindness, to call and entertain the poor, from whom no such thing could be expected; and for encouragement, closes his discourse with the promise, that the bountiful should be blessed, in the recompence they should receive at the resurrection of the just, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.

To *this* the person here speaking may perhaps have his eye, and under what he utters, he may take *this* to be his sense, ver. 15. "O happy
" *he!* that shall be join'd to that company, whom
" God will take care to see rewarded; that shall
" be admitted to share with them in the enter-
" tainments of heaven: if a place at such a table as
" this, in the company and conversation of a holy

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“ *man* (and 'tis like he took our Saviour for no more ;) if *this* be *so* delightful now ; what will it be to *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, and all the *faithful* at the *provision* God hath made for *such hereafter* ? *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God :*” that shall have a *part*, in the *glories and joys* of that *place and state* !

Upon this *our Lord* takes *occasion* to instruct him in the *way of obtaining* the blessedness above, viz. by *closing* with the *grace* now *offer'd* in the *gospel*, and this under the *easy resemblance* of a *prepared feast* ; with reference to *which* we have considerable,

I. *The preparation made.*

II. *The messenger employ'd to carry the notice, and to whom.*

III. *The success of the invitation reported back to the Lord of the feast.*

I. We have an account of *the preparation made.*

Then, said he, *a certain man made a great supper, and bade many*, Matt. xxii. 2. This *man* is by St. Matthew stiled a *king*, and the *supper* spoken of as a *marriage-supper* for his *son* ; by both, understand *the abundant provision* God hath made and manifested in *Christ*, for the *salvation and happiness* of perishing sinners : the *great things* purchased by his *blood*, and *freely offered* in the *gospel* to all that come unto God by him : *pardon, adoption, grace and heaven ; wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*, the unspeakable privileges secur'd to all true believers, who yield them-

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themselves to God, and consent to be saved by Christ in the appointed way. *This is the feast prepared.*

II. *We have the messenger employed to carry the notice, and to whom: and at supper-time he sent his servant.*

At supper-time: in the fittest season God sent forth Christ, his servant in chief, or by way of eminency; and after him his apostles and ministers to renew the invitation to them that were bidden, and hasten their coming, by signifying that the preparations of grace were brought to perfection.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spake by his Son, Heb. i. 1, 2. The word being made flesh, and dwelling among men, John i. 14. vouchsafed himself to be a preacher of that salvation he came to purchase. For this he has a commission, which he opens and reads, where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, Luke iv. 18. from Isa. lxi. 1. And closing the book, adds with application to himself, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

And as the father sent his son, so our Lord sends others, John xx. 21.

'Tis the same feast, which the prophets in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New, invite to; only in the former 'twas more darkly pro-

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pos'd, whilst men were call'd to believe in a *Saviour to come*: But at *supper-time*, upon Christ's *actual manifestation* to accomplish our redemption, by fulfilling and *finishing* what was foretold concerning him, *evangelical ministers* are to be most express----*Come, for all things are now ready*, Col. i. 20. A ransom is found and slain, a sacrifice offer'd, *peace made*, a covenant of grace established in the blood of the Redeemer, and so a way opened for apostate sinners to come back to God, Eph. i. 16. with *acceptance* and welcome in the Beloved, in whom the father hath declared himself well-pleased, Matt. iii. 17.

The message is first sent to *them that were bidden*, that is, to the *Jews*, the posterity of *Abraham*, God's ancient and peculiar people, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants; and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, and to them he is first offer'd, Rom. ix. 4, 5. The glad tidings of repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47.

III. We are told what entertainment the invitation meets with. The grace freely offer'd, is generally neglected; and they all with one consent began to make excuse, ver. 18. The first said, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it*: another said, *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them*: another, *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come*. In short, the possessions and business, pleasures and cares of the present world, engage and ingross their

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their *hearts*, and draw them another way: and tho' they endeavour to *soften* their refusal by *plausible pretences*, yet when *Christ* and his *unsearchable riches* are offer'd, and the *heavenly glory* is included in the *feast* prepared; all their *excuses* from things of *earth*, are but so many *aggravations* of their folly and ingratitude. They must be more than blind, who prefer the *dying comforts* and *concerns* of *time*, to the *enjoyment* of *God* and *Christ* for ever: and when by order from *heaven* invited *thither*, contemptuously neglect so great *salvation*, and cleave to the *pleasures* of *sense* and *sin* as far better.

However, *this* was *done* by the *generality* of the *Jews*, in the time of our Saviour's converse upon earth. Tho' the *Son of God*, yet being cloath'd with *flesh*, and having on the *form of a servant*, Isa. liii. 3. they * *despise* his mean appearance, and *will not come to him* that they might have life, John v. 40. His *kingdom* not being of *this world*, they will be none of his subjects, nor forsake their dear enjoyments *below*, for a *treasure in heaven*, Luke xix. 14.

The kind *invitation* being thus *rejected*, the *servant* came and shewed his *Lord* these things, ver. 21. How sad is it, when the *messengers of peace* are sent back with the heavy complaint of a *despised gospel*! and *witness* against a *disobedient people* in the *prophet's* mournful language, *Lord, who hath believed our report*! Isa. liii. 1.

Then the *Master of the house* being angry, said to his *servant*, go out quickly into the *streets* and

* This was foreseen and foretold of them, and they exactly fulfil it.

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lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maim'd, and the halt, and the blind. See the condescending grace of God, how willing he is of sinners salvation: if the rich despise and perish, the poor shall have the gospel preached to them with better success Mat. xi. 5. God having chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him, James ii. 5.*

Having gain'd on these, there is ground for a more comfortable report, which is made in the text: and the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

In which words we have the true temper of a gospel minister, in his chearful obedience to the divine will, and earnest thirst after the salvation of souls.

*“ Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded: I
“ have carried thy message to lost sinners, en-
“ treating them to accept of thy offer'd grace;
“ I have assured them that all things are
“ ready necessary to their happiness; and in thy
“ name besought them to come in, that all might
“ be theirs. I have been instant in season and out
“ of season; and tho' I have not run in vain, nor
“ labour'd in vain, as to all, yet there is room.*

*“ How many are there of them that believe
“ not! whose minds the God of this world hath
“ blinded, to the hindring the light of the glorious
“ gospel of Christ from shining into them, 2 Cor.
“ iv. 3, 4. And if this gospel continues to be hid,
“ they are utterly lost, but being yet in the land*

** Πτωχοὶ ἐυαγγελίζονται. The poor are evangelized, or effectually wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel.*

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“ *of the living*, they are within the *reach* of *mercy*.
“ How deplorable soever be their case at present,
“ they are *out of hell*, and so not past all hope.
“ Their *final state* is not *fix'd* beyond possibility
“ of change. The *bottomless pit* is not shut upon
“ them, out of *which* there is *no redemption*:
“ Tho' their guilt is aggravated, and their dan-
“ ger great, there is yet room for repentance and
“ pardon, faith and salvation, and in order to
“ *these*; for the *tenders* and *means* of grace: O
“ that they may be still vouchsafed and succeeded
“ to a blessed end.

“ After the many *generations* that are *pass'd*
“ away, more are *coming up*; the *harvest* truly
“ is great, but the *labourers* are few, Luke x. 2.
“ and is there not *room* for thy servants to speak,
“ and for God to work, that precious, immortal
“ *souls* may be saved, every *one* of which is of
“ more *worth* than all the *world*?

“ What multitudes are there yet *uncall'd*?
“ that never heard the *joyful sound*; who at this
“ time are *without Christ*, *aliens from the com-*
“ *monwealth* of Israel, *strangers to the covenant*
“ *of promise*, *having no hope*, and *without God in*
“ *the world*, Ephes. ii. 12. And how much *room*
“ is there for thy power and grace to be displayed
“ among them?

“ What costly *preparations* are made for the
“ *recovery* of a lost *world*? *which* the wisdom
“ and goodness of God will not suffer to be in
“ *vain*: and how *extensive* are the *promises* made
“ to *Christ*, of his being a *light* to the Gentiles,
“ and *salvation* unto the ends of the earth, Isa.
“ xlix. 6. that he shall see of the travel of his soul,
“ and

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“and be satisfied? Isa. lv. 11. Whatever of this
“he has hitherto seen, O let it be remember’d,
“that yet there is room.”

These are the ardent desires of such as God sends: the humble earnest pleadings of the *servant* with the *Lord of the feast*, that *more* may *hear*, and *more* obey the *heavenly call*, and so be made *partakers of Christ*: upon which the *commission* is *enlarged*, and extended to the *Gentiles*; in the giving out of which we may read the *goodness* and *severity* of *God*, and *rejoice with trembling*: *And the Lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled: for I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper*, ver. 23, 24.

Thus the *parable* closes, with an awful *judgment* denounced on the *Jews*, who *first had*, but *rejected* the *gospel*, and which *that wretched people*, for their obstinate *unbelief*, still lie under: *justly excluded the heavenly feast*, which, together with the distinguishing *grace* that called them to it, *they made light of*: whilst *this* is the *message* with which we are sent to you, *compel them to come in that my house may be filled*.

Compell them to come in: not by * *force* and *violence*, as the *papists* expound it, to justify their

* Persecution was never appointed or allow’d by Christ to propagate christianity. ’Tis contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and unworthy of its author. The religion is false that needs it, and the church of *Rome* antichristian, as supported by it. How horrid and impious would it sound to say, that *the greatest tyrants are the best teachers*: and yet this must be said, if dungeons and gallies, racks and gibbets, swords and flames, are proper means of making converts.

cruel

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cruel and bloody methods of making *profelytes*; no, the *constraints* we are to use are to be those of *love*. By the most powerful arguments *proper* to a *feast*, and like to prevail on the invited guests, are we to endeavour to win souls, *one* of which is *this*, and yet *there is room*. The scope of which you may take in this *comfortable truth*, viz. that,

Whatever has been the success of the gospel for the time past, you may yet come in and be graciously received and for ever saved.

Wisdom hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table, Prov. ix. 1, 2. And amongst the happy ones, partakers of the joy of the prepared feast; Yet there is room.

In speaking to this I shall shew,

I. *Where there is room.*

II. *For whom.*

III. *What this leads to, by way of use.*

I. *Where there is room.*

You may take the answer to this in the following instances.

(1.) *There is yet room in the mercy of God.*

This is *over all his works*, and *from everlasting to everlasting*, Ps. cxlv. 9. *Mercy belongeth unto God*, Ps. ciii. 17. 'tis essential to his nature, and inseparable from it. *Mercy* makes up the greatest part of his *name*, and is that which he esteems his *glory*, Ps. lxii. 12. When *Moses* put up that petition, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*; God answered, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim before thee the name of*
the

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the Lord, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. And that which he proclaims is, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, Exod. xxxiv. 6. and what follows is no way repugnant to this, that *he will by no means clear the guilty*, as it is meant of *those* that *will* have none of his mercy; that by *impenitency* and *unbelief* bind their guilt upon their own souls, and so *choose* destruction, notwithstanding his declared *willingness* to save.

How lovely is the representation the blessed God here gives of himself, and how constantly has he acted up to it in his dealings with the children of men. This is that *name* of God, which *they that know*, the Psalmist concludes, *will trust in him*, being able to add, *for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*, Ps. ix. 10. No instance can be given of his having done so: and his mercy is as firm and sure, open and free, infinite and unmeasurable as ever it was. *Here* therefore *there is still room* for miserable perishing sinners: to *this* they may flee and find refuge to the world's end.

Mercy is the attribute of God's *delight*, Mich. vii. 18. He is glad of an opportunity to shew it. *The Lord waiteth that he may be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. and *taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy*, Ps. cxlvii. 11. For lost sinners to do so, in a returning way, is the most acceptable thing they can do. That they may believe this and make trial, 'tis the *record* given of him in his own word, that *God is love*, 1 John iv. 3:
and

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and how many of the *children of wrath*, after all their dark disquieting thoughts, have by sweet experience been led to own it ?

'Tis indeed common for the tempter to suggest, and poor souls are apt to give into the *sinking fears*, that the *mercy of God is clean gone*, and his bowels restrained and shut up, *Pf. lxxvii. 8, 9.* That he *has forgotten to be gracious*, and will never pardon or regard, never accept and save such as they : that 'tis in vain to go to him, to call upon him, to seek or cry after him in expectation of relief, there being no hope, no room. But in opposition to this, the exhortation and promise ought to be read as still in force, *let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7, 8, 9.* And for greater encouragement it follows ; *for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord ; you are not to measure me by yourselves.* There is a vast difference betwixt your thoughts and ways and mine ; and this, as in other instances, so in particular as to the *forgiveness of sin*, and shewing mercy to sinners : for *as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Behold now we have heard, and may be assur'd, that the *Lord God of Israel* is a *merciful God*, *1 Kings xx. 31.* He doth not *delight in blood and death.* How often hath he received to favour, such as had forfeited their lives, and were entirely in his power.

The

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The God, finners, with whom you have to do, to whom you are to make your submission, is the *father of mercies*, 1 Cor. i. 3. the *God of all grace*, 1 Pet. v. 10. The fountain of life and love is with him, *Pf. xxxvi. 9.* and tho' it has been flowing down upon a lost world for several * thousand years, and led up *many sons unto glory*, 'tis as full as ever. *His compassions fail not*, Lam. iii. 22. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from God?* Is. xl. 27, 28. My case is so sad as to be past cure : no help is to be had for me, no not from heaven : God takes no notice of me, or is *unwilling* or *unable* to save. There's no reason to run out into such complaints. *Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary.* What may not be expected from him who is *God*, and *not man*, and so all-sufficient, subject to no imperfection. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Gen. xviii. 14. When can the mercy of the *everlasting God* be supposed to fail? What person or place is beneath the regard of his compassionate eye, or beyond the reach of his relieving arm, who is the *Creator of the ends of the earth?* How many are the instances of his *mercy* and *grace*, and what comfort should it give to such, as in a sense of sin, are ready to throw up all hope, that in the display of these he is no way *tir'd*.

Behold the Lord's hand is not shortned that he cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that he can-

* Ever since the first promise.

not

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not bear, Isa. lix. 1. After all that he has done in recovering and saving those that are gone before, how many times over is it repeated for the support of all that need it, that *his mercy endureth for ever*, Ps. cxxxvi. in every verse.

He is *unchangeable* in his *being* and all his *perfections*; always the same: and as to acts of kindness and grace, *he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*, Eph. iii. 20. Our largest desires and most rais'd conceptions fall infinitely short of his boundless love.

He hath a multitude of loving-kindnesses, Isa. lxiii. 7. *is full of compassion*, Ps. lxxxvi. 15. *abundant in goodness, rich in mercy*, Eph. ii. 4. *the whole earth is full of it*, Ps. xxxiii. 5. and *it is great above the heavens*, Ps. cxix. 64. extends to all the ages of time, and runs over to a blessed eternity, Ps. cviii. 4. *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! how great is thy goodness*, in which there is so much room for the *children of men to put their trust*, Ps. xxxvi. 7. xxxi. 19.

(2.) *There is yet room in the merits of Christ.*

The *satisfaction* he hath made is full and declared to be so, in his *resurrection* from the dead, and ascending in triumph, and *entering into heaven itself*, where he now *appeareth in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24.

The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. and *he hath brought in everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24. answered all the demands of justice, and made way for mercy to reign; and having been the *propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 2. by virtue of an *unchangeable priesthood*, he

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ever liveth to make intercession, and so is able to save to the utmost, all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 24, 25.

Christ's death and sufferings will never be forgotten, nor the efficacy of 'em ever fail, for he appears *in the midst of the throne*, with the marks of his wounds upon him, *a lamb as it had been slain*, Rev. v. 6.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray; turning every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, Isa. liii. 6. and he was not mistaken in the *ransom he found*, Job. xxxiii. 24. nor can we be disappointed in *committing* our souls into his hand, 2 Tim. i. 12. Our *help is laid upon one, chosen and exalted of God*, Ps. lxxxix. 19. and *mighty to save*, Isa. lxi. 1. He came by *commission* from heaven to *seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. and 'tis promised, that *the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*, Isa. liii. 10.

As the *captain* of our salvation, he has sufficiently testify'd his love to souls by *dying*, and is *made perfect through suffering* for the blessed design, Heb. ii. 10. So that the sinner's way to him is open, and the greatest encouragement given, against whatever objections may be thrown into it.

Think, O drooping soul, *who* Christ was, and *what* he underwent, for *whom*, in what *manner*, and to what *end*; and learn from all the reasonableness of admitting hope in thy case.

He was the eternal *Son of God*, and yet stoop'd down in the *form of a servant*; *humbled himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of

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the cross, Phil. ii. 7, 8. He was cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26. 'Twas the human nature he assum'd; in our room and stead he died. Dan. ix. 26. Surely he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed, Isa. liii. 4, 5. He had no sin of his own for which to suffer, being holy, harmless, undefiled, Heb. ix. 26. having done no iniquity, nor was guile found in his mouth, Isa. liii. 9.

And yet innocent and spotless as he was, he went as a lamb to the slaughter, 1 Pet. i. 19. by a voluntary act, laid down his life, Isa. liii. 7. freely submitted to the rage of men, the wrath of God, due to us for sin, 1 John x. 18. the bitterest sufferings of soul and body, as necessary to our recovery, and steadily held on, till with his dying breath he could say, It is finished, John xix. 30.

And as he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. and thus risen, him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts v. 31. And lest others should think themselves excluded, thus runs the command, Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, Isaiah xlv. 22.

Now, it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, Rom. viii. 33, 34. and tho' so far above

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us, in the most comfortable manner employ'd in our favour, *making intercession for us.* This is his work *at present*, as well as *heretofore*, and *will be*, 'till *all that the father hath given him*, are pray'd up into the same glory with him, John xvii. 24. In whatever numbers sinners would be persuaded to apply to him, he hath enough to support his *claims* for them, and answer the largest expectations they can bring with them, to the world's end. *By his own blood, he entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,* Heb. ix. 12.

The Saviour that God hath provided, is an *all-sufficient*, as well as the *only* one. There's no need of any other, nor for Christ to die over again; *for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,* Heb. x. 14. laid a foundation for their being so. All that are gone to heaven already, have been *wash'd and sanctified, and justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of God* which he procur'd, 1 Cor. vi. 11. and he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,* Heb. xiii. 8. As *able and willing to save now*, as in the years and ages that are *past.* *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,* 1 Pet. iii. 18. and they are his own words, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,* John vi. 37.

(3.) *There is yet room, as to the power and efficacy of the spirit, to renew and change the hardest heart, and bring sinners home, by repentance and faith, to God and Christ; and this spirit may yet be hoped for.*

Such

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Such a *change* is *absolutely necessary*, as our *salvation* begun, and the *special* grace of the spirit is *equally necessary* in order to it.

We have *destroy'd ourselves*, but if ever we are recovered, it must be by *help* from *heaven*, Hof. xiii. 9. This is clear in *scripture*, and will be readily subscrib'd to, by *every one that knows the plague of his own heart*, 1 Kings viii. 38. and has in good earnest made any attempts towards a cure. To lift at the heart, is to lift at a mountain, not to be stir'd but by a power greater than our own. 'Tis a *hard impenitent heart*, Rom. ii. 5. and so remains, till *God give repentance unto life*, Rev. ii. 21. Sinners neither *will*, nor *can*, come to *Christ*, Acts xi. 18. except the *father draw them*, *inclining* and *enabling* them to do so, John v. 40. and thus *faith* also is the *gift of God*, John vi. 44. Both these, as to act, are to spring from a new and heavenly nature, *Eph. v. 8.* a total renovation within, which we can never be the authors of to ourselves, *Phil. i. 29.*

Well, let none hereupon conclude his case remediless, or that he can never be recovered *at all*, because not *by himself*, or the *help* of any *meer creature*. There is *balm in Gilead*, a *physician there*, Jer. viii. 22. and so *hope in Israel concerning this thing*, Ezr. x. 2. It does not speak the case the worse, but has an encouraging sound, that as insufficient to our own recovery, we are shut up to God; and that our *salvation*, from *first to last*, is to be all of grace, that all may redound to its praise and glory. What is *impossible with men*, Eph. ii. 8. is not so *with God*, Eph. i. 6. with whom all things are possible, *Mat. xix.*

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26. That which we cannot do of ourselves, he can effectually enable us to ; and as his grace is *free*, there is no reason for any, that in a sense of his need, will seek it in the appointed way, to despond.

The conversion of sinners is the spirit's work, the part he takes in the affair of our salvation. This he is every way sufficient for, and as the Redeemer's agent, to apply his purchase, most ready to engage in. 'Tis his office and errand into the world, to *convince of sin*, and lead lost sinners to the provided Saviour, and unto God by him, and so carry on that design on earth, for which Christ died, and is now employ'd in heaven. Through his concurring influence, the gospel becomes in fact, what it is in tendency and design, the *word of life*, Phil. ii. 16. the *word of faith*, the *power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*, 1 Tim. iv. 6.

Many *dead* souls have been hereby *quickned*, and of unholy, sanctified and created anew, Rom. i. 16. *all old things* done away, and the image and love of God introduc'd, where enmity and corruption reigned before, 2 Cor. v. 17. This has been done on some of the vilest sinners, who hereupon have been able to say, in thankful admiration of the kindness and love of God, *according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. And where the spirit will work to this end, in that *day of power*, Ps. cx. 3. the most backward and *unwilling* shall be made *willing*, willing to be the Lord's

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Lord's, and the farthest gone recovered and saved. The *word of God*, how unsuccessful soever before, shall now no more *return void*, but *accomplish his pleasure*, and *prosper in the thing whereto he sends it*, Isa. lv. 11. namely, *to open sinners eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, Acts xxvi. 18.

And whereas here the solicitous soul is apt to ask, with great eagerness, *May this spirit be had?* May his gracious influence be obtained, to the like blessed issue? I answer, *It may*: the grounds of hope are most encouraging and comfortable.

The spirit is stil'd the *promise of the Father*, Luke xxiv. 49. that which he hath engaged to *pour out*, which hath a special reference to the gospel-day, Zech. xii. 10.

This Christ laid down his life to open a way for, and it may now be expected as the fruit of his death. 'Twas a great part of the *curse of the law*, that the spirit of God should retire from a sinful world, and have no more to do with guilty polluted souls: without a ransom found, this curse we had been still under: But *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ*: and among other things that blessing contains, this is express, *that we might receive the promise of the spirit*, or the accomplishment of it, in the pouring out of the *spirit promised*, Gal. iii. 13, 14.

Hereupon the *gospel* becomes the *ministration of the spirit*: that is, eminently so, above the *Jewish dispensation*; tho' that was accompanied with a

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divine influence that made it truly *glorious*, yet the glory it had, is said to be *no glory*, in comparison of the *excelling glory* of the gospel, in the more abundant effusion of the spirit with it, than had been before vouchsafed, 2 Cor. iii. 7---11.

This spirit is generally at work upon the souls of men: where is the conscience that cannot witness to it? And if it be not the sinner's fault, is ready to work on to the most desirable end. *The going forth of the Lord is prepared as the morning*, Hos. vi. 3. that is growing clearer and clearer unto the perfect day. The *common grace* wherewith sinners are favour'd, gives them a fair prospect and advantage of getting that which is *special* and necessary to a saving change. This it has a tendency to, and is design'd to put them upon looking after.

To quicken to this, the *throne of grace* is open, on which God would be conceived, and requires and expects to be sought unto, for the *new heart*, and his holy spirit in order to it, which he hath declared his purpose to bestow, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, *compared*.

Much of the spirit is already given without our asking; and as to what is farther needed, our Lord assures us, no earthly parent can be so ready, to give *bread* rather than a stone, to his craving child, as our *heavenly Father is to give the holy spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 11, 13. And what reason have we to believe this? after the gift of his son to that end, and his solemn declaration, that he hath *no pleasure in the death of sinners*, but rather that they would *turn and live*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. and the one is not to be prevented,

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prevented, nor the other accomplished, without the grace of the spirit, that is to come from his hand.

For this the greatest fervency and importunity is encouraged, *Ask and it shall be given: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you*, Luke xi. 9. And if we do not presently succeed, instead of fainting, we should rise in vehemence, remembering who has said, *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God*, Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. He that regardeth the young ravens when they cry, will not be deaf to the cries of his rational creatures that are of much greater value; their cries for grace to renew and make them like himself, and whereby they may be fitted to serve and please, and be happy in him, the end they were made and redeemed for.

When this is our errand at the throne of grace, the most amiable conceptions of God should enliven every petition, and make us unwearied in supplication to him; as his *thoughts towards such*, are *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give them a desired end*, and answer their *expectations* of it, Jer. xxix. 11, 13. How many are the witnesses he has given of this. And they that seek him have still his assuring word, *ye shall find me when ye seek for me with all your heart*.

If it be said, none can so seek him, but they on whom his spirit has already been savingly at work, yet as he *despiset not the day of small things*,

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things, Zech. iv. 10. all that seek him as well as they can by the help of grace vouchsafed, may expect more grace, to enable them to seek and pray better, 'till they are brought into the number of those, who do it in a manner to which the promise is made: for it shall never be said of any soul, that it was left to perish, thro' God's withholding the grace which it was willing and desirous of, and with what earnestness it could, restlessly labouring after. It can't be suppos'd, when those very desires and endeavours are of God's own exciting, and owing to the influence of his spirit, and could not be found without it.

Upon the whole therefore, there is no reason to be discouraged at the greatness of the change, 'tis our duty to look after, and our insufficiency for it in our own strength. Thus runs the command and promise together, *Turn ye at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you*, Prov. i. 2, 3. Do you what you can in order to it; set about the work with your best endeavours, and hold out in it, and help shall not be wanting.

Nor are you to doubt of a blessed issue: *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, Hof. vi. 3. If you are in the way with him, in the use of appointed means, seeking, lamenting after him; praying, begging, crying for his spirit and grace, resolve, come of it what will, you'll not desist; you'll continue to follow and call upon him as long as you live, and never give over till you are heard or die: nothing can prove your ruin but dropping the pursuit, and turning out of the way you are in. This is the way that
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leads

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leads to life. You are approaching nearer and nearer vitality: a little farther, and it shall take hold of your souls, and make you instances of the meaning of those words, as they may import a passing by the first resurrection from nature to grace, *Your hearts shall live that seek God*, Psal. lxi. 32. *In working out our salvation, God is said to be working with us, both to will and to do*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. And the work shall not cease on his part, if it be not first deserted or neglected on ours. And where our weak endeavours can reach no farther, how comfortable is it to hear, that *he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he encreaseth strength*, Isa. xl. 29.

And tho' we can never deserve the help we need, nor do any thing to found a claim to it, so as that God should be said to be unfaithful should he withhold it from us, and not reward the best endeavours of nature with special grace; yet no instance can be given, of his having fail'd any that continued to wait upon him, to wait for him in the appointed way; and why should it be thought he will now begin?

On the contrary; when 'tis the Father of mercies with whom we have to do, in and through a Mediator, and this his own son; when, as the fruit of the Redeemer's death, he hath declared his readiness and purpose to communicate his spirit, for the conversion of sinners, and will certainly make it good; when he hath taken it among his titles, that *he is a God bearing prayer*, Ps. lxxv. 2. with this design, that all flesh should come to him, and all that have made trial have found him so; when his compassion for souls is
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the same as ever, and we have the same kind command and invitation to come, with those that have gone before; when *the Lord waiteth to be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. and calls them all *blest that waits for him*, that *watch daily at wisdom's gates*, and *wait at the posts of her doors*, Prov. viii. 34. where he *commandeth the blessing*, Ps. cxxxiii. 3. and is wont to be found: what abundant reason is given to hope from such considerations as these, that the regenerating spirit may yet be had, by which, whatever be our state at present, it shall be effectually and savingly changed, and the dead in sin made alive to God, and the objects of his love? The spirit is of efficacy sufficient for this, and obtainable in order to it. As to this therefore there is yet room.

(4.) *There is yet room in the covenant of grace.* The grant of pardon and life, through Jesus Christ, to every one that *repents and believes*.

Wherever the gospel comes, the great God thus calls by it to the children of men, *Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord*, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. quit the practice of sin and the company of sinners, and *yield yourselves to God*: and then the promise follows, *I will receive you, and will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*, Rom. vi. 13. This is the invitation and offer he continues to make, and the answer he expects is, *Behold we come unto thee, thou art the Lord our God*, Jer. iii. 22.

By repentance and faith we are to enter into a covenant state, and the command for these is yet standing, *Repent ye, and believe the gospel*,
Mark

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Mark i. 15. And every penitent believer shall find the promises of remission of sin, and eternal salvation, still as ready to be made good to him, as to any that have been before received to mercy.

The *gospel* of the grace of God is said to be *everlasting*, Rev. xiv. 6. as in every age, it will be the duty of all that live under it, to turn from sin, and accept of Christ, *Acts* xx. 24. and as to all such, there shall be an *everlasting connexion* between the duties it enjoins, and the blessings it promises. No sincere penitent shall be shut out from mercy, no sound believer sent to hell.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. And there is no time limited, so as that it can be said to any, whilst on earth; "If after such a day or month, or year, you should heartily close with an offer'd Saviour, *it is too late* : so long you may come to God and Christ and be accepted, but after that, tho' your life may go farther, repentance and faith, however sincere, will do you no good." We have no warrant to say any such thing; but the contrary: whilst there is life there is hope. Whilst the soul is in the body, the covenant is tendered, and we are required, and 'tis our duty to take hold of it: and all that do so, at what time soever, shall have the blessing of it sure. Tho' it be commonly said, and there is reason to fear, that *late repentance is seldom true*; it must be added, that *true repentance is never too late*.

We are indeed commanded, and 'tis our *present duty* to turn to God; and great sin and great folly

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folly not to do so, as every day or moment, and so every call may be with us the last: but whilst sinners are within hearing, we are still to invite, and may assure all that are truly willing to be the Lord's, that he is also willing to be theirs, yea more willing than they can be; and so a covenant may be made between God and their souls, a *perpetual one that shall not be forgotten*, Jer. l. 5.

There are arguments enough, that ought to constrain us to a present choice of God to be *ours*, and a present dedication of ourselves to him to be *his*; and happy they with whom this is speedily and early done: but we are not to tell any, who may be found strangers to God and Christ even at the *eleventh hour*, that now nothing is left them but to despair: no, but to invite them in, and assure them there is room, and that if they come, they shall be received, and entertained, and saved still. As *ambassadors for Christ*, we continue to *pray you to be reconciled to God*; and you are to look upon it, as tho' *God did beseech you by us*, to come to an agreement with him. And there's no ground to say to any that should now be willing, which none could be without his grace, that God would not accept of them. It can't be imagin'd, that he would follow any soul with the solicitations of his spirit, till he gain its unfeigned consent, that when throwing itself into the arms of his mercy, he might fill it with the greater confusion, in rejecting and casting it off.

God is most sincere in his offers and calls, and all that will make trial shall find him so. He will

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will not be mocked himself, nor does he mock or trifle with any. The invitation comes from his heart, and is of equal force as if but *now* given out. *Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* And again, *incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, and thereby settle upon you the greatest blessings, even the sure mercies of David,* Isa. lv. 3. The mercies promised to *David* as a believer, shall, thro' *Christ* the son of *David*, and Mediator of the covenant, be sure to all that take hold of it in the way prescrib'd. *All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen,* 2 Cor. i. 20. And none shall be excluded the benefit of them, who do not reject, and so judge themselves unworthy of the blessings they contain. *Whosoever* has a *will*, has a warrant to come, and the greatest encouragement, *let him take of the water of life freely,* Rev. xxii. 17. In the last day of the feast, after several spent, our Lord delivers the invitation in the present time, as noting the way still open, and he does it with the greatest earnestness, *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,* John vii. 37. And the promise stands firm that he had before given, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,* John vi. 37.

I am sensible of the objection, the concerned sinner may be here ready to make, namely, *Do not ministers often speak of a day of grace, and*
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that it may be past before life is ended? That this is a possible case, tho' the most dreadful on this side hell, the soul being irrecoverably lost, by whom the happy season has been outstood?

To this I answer; the day of grace is to be taken,

1st, As it signifies a time of light and influence from above, denoted by *day*: a season wherein, by the strivings of the spirit, in and with the gospel; external calls and convictions impress'd, and for a while kept alive within; sinners may be said to have a fair opportunity, and great advantages, for knowing and complying with the things of their peace.

Such a season as this may doubtless be over, and the *things of their peace hid from their eyes*: Thus the day of grace may be past; that is, God may withdraw his spirit from such as go on to *resist* and do *despite unto him*, and leave them under the power of sin, which they will not let go, resolving never to give them that grace they have despis'd and forfeited, without which no saving change can be made. In this respect, some may be forsaken and given up, while their lives are continued; but who they are, as to particular persons, cannot be said.

There are symptoms that speak the case of some more dangerous than others, as making nearer approaches to it: as when convictions once felt are gone, and leave those on whom they were impress'd more senseless and secure; unmov'd under the most *lively* ministrations of the word, and the great things threatned and promised in it: when hereupon they cast off duty, and make bold

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bold with sin, ridicule religion, and the serious professors of it; especially if they grow old in this course: the case of such is visibly sad and deplorable; sad to a degree that ought to awaken a deep, an awful active fear, that should put them upon present flight: but by no means is it to be concluded *desperate* by themselves or others.

We can't say God has finally forsaken them; or resolved never more to strive with them. For how shall his purpose be known unless he declare it? and where has he said, as to particular persons, *That seeing they continued obstinate to such a day or year, from that time forward he will never more entertain any thoughts of favour towards them? never more, in a way of mercy concern himself about them?* Who can positively determine what as to this, the great and blessed God, *who giveth no account of his matters*, will, or will not do? Who dare limit the holy One of *Israel*, as to his patience and power, compassion and grace; and say, so long God has waited and been ready to work, but can wait no longer, do no more? What *presumption* is carried in such *despair*!

I have heard of a certain person (whose name I could mention) who was tempted to conclude his *day* over, and himself lost: that therefore 'twas his best course to put an end to his life, which, if continued, would but serve to increase his sin, and consequently his misery, from which there was no escape: and seeing he must be in hell, the sooner he was there, the sooner he should know the worst, which was preferable to his being worn away with the tormentful expectation of what was to come. Under the power
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and prevalency of such suggestions as these, he went to a river with a design to throw himself in; but as he was about to do it, seemed to hear a voice saying to him, *Who can tell?* at least as deep an impression is made upon him, as if those words had been audibly delivered. By this therefore he is brought to a stand: his thoughts are arrested, and thus begin to work on the passage mentioned. *Who can tell*, Jonah iii. 9. viz. what God can do when he will proclaim his grace glorious?

Who can tell --- How far God may suffer the tempter to prevail, and yet disappoint his malice and rage?

Who can tell ---- How long the spirit may cease to strive, and yet return with renewing efficacious grace?

Who can tell ---- But such a one as I may find mercy? Or what will be the issue of humble earnest prayer to heaven for it?

Who can tell ---- What purposes God will serve in my recovery? And by such thoughts as these, being so far influenced as to resolve to try; it pleased God graciously to come in, and enable him, through all his doubts and fears, to throw himself, by faith, on Jesus Christ, as able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, humbly desiring and expecting mercy for his sake, as to his own soul. in which he was not disappointed; but after this, became an eminent christian and minister, and from his own experience of the riches of grace, was greatly useful to the conversion and comfort of others.

Tho'

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Tho' therefore in general it may be said, that the *day of grace*, in this sense, may expire before the close of life, and there are circumstances in which there is too much reason to fear it; yet descending to particulars, we are not to pass a definitive sentence, and say so it is with me, or any one else by name. God may prescribe limits to his own grace unknown to us; but because unknown, we ought not to bound it, by taking up positive conclusions concerning its compass and extent. We have no rule or warrant to do so. 'Tis no man's duty to believe himself utterly left and seal'd up to wrath, but with the greatest fear, to mix hope, that it may be otherwise: hope that may put him upon endeavours that it may never be his case.

The use we are to make of the possibility and danger of this, is presently to repent and break off from sin; to beware of making light of Christ, or resisting the spirit, if he is still at work, lest it should come to that, the apprehensions of which are so very terrible: or if the spirit is withdrawn, with all the earnestness possible, to beg his return; and from the instance I have given, learn that, after all our fears and doubts of the contrary, he may do so. He has return'd to others, and left a blessing behind *him*, Joel ii. 14. why may he not return to me? But the day of grace is also to be taken.

2dly, As it stands for the time, in which God is ready, for the sake of Christ, to accept and shew mercy to every one that sincerely repents and returns to him: and in this sense the blessed season never ends, but with the sinners life and

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breath. Tho' God has not told the obstinate disobedient sinner, that he will give him grace to repent; yet all that truly repent and believe, have his promise that they shall be pardoned and saved.

This is the tenour of the *covenant of grace*; the fix'd rule of his proceedings, as to the distribution of life and death, from which he will at no time recede. As therefore the impenitent unbeliever, continuing such to the death, can never be acquitted, so the believing penitent, whenever he becomes such, in the present life, shall never be condemned. The *promise* will be in force as long as the command: while God calls after sinners, and bids them *turn*, they may be assured that they that turn *shall live*.

(5.) *There is yet room in the household of faith.*

More members may be added to Christ's *mystical body*, and his friends here, as well as the angels above, would rejoice in the accession of any to their number, to partake of the privileges of his house, and walk in fellowship with them, as children in the same family.

The prediction is fulfill'd, *Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious*, and how many soever are built upon him, *Isa. xxviii. 16. as quoted 1 Pet. ii. 6.* the promise is still firm, *He that believeth on him, shall not be confounded.* Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus, *2 Cor. iii. 11. to whom, coming as to a living stone, disallow'd indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 1 Pet. ii. 5. ye also as lively stones, may be * built up a spiritual house, an habitation of God thro' the spirit, Eph. ii. 22.*

* οἰκοδομεῖσθε may be read as a command, *Be ye built.*

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The church is a society call'd out from the rest of the world, to be still growing, by the bringing in God' chosen, to the world's end. In order to this the gospel is preached, and Christ's ambassadors labour, and hope, and wait, being encouraged by the extensive request he puts up, with reference to it, a little before his death: *Neither pray I for these alone, namely, his present disciples, but for them also which shall believe on me, thro' their word, that they all may be one,* John xvii. 20.

In our heavenly Father's house, there is the most plentiful provision: all that belong to it, in what number soever, have *bread enough and to spare*: which should be an inducement to all that have gone away from him, to return, confess their sin and folly, and beg pardon and admission; and in so doing, they shall have welcome, beyond any thing they could expect: *For in him the fatherless find mercy,* Hos. xiv. 3.

They that are called, and come into the vineyard at the *third, sixth, and ninth* hour, do not hinder others from being invited, and received at the *eleventh*, Mat. xx. Happy they that are already entered, in obedience to the call given: but more still may be admitted and employed; and all that are faithful, shall have from the Lord of the *vineyard*, the *good man* of the *house*, a gracious reward.

Christ, in sending forth his apostles, to *disciple all nations*, and *teach* those whom they should bring into his school, *to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them*, gives them this most encouraging promise, *And lo I am with you alway,*

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even unto the end of the world, Amen. Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. This is not confined to the persons of the apostles, for they are long since dead, but includes all other his faithful ministers, whom he should call and commission to publish his gospel, and dispense his ordinances in his church, for the bringing in and building up his people, till time shall be no more. *Tho' one generation passeth away, and another cometh,* Eccl. i. 4. Christ will have a church in each, and some to declare his will and administer his institutions in it, which he will alway be with; and in token, and as an effect of his *presence*, in every age, there shall be adding to the number of *those that shall be saved*, Acts ii. 47. And as many as are *ordained to eternal life*, be brought to *believe*, Acts xiii. 48. With this Christ comforts himself, and it may be of use to keep them from desponding, who have not at present an interest in him, that there are more to be brought in: *All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me*, John vi. 37. And forasmuch as many of these are not yet called, and many not born; as the Redeemer shall have a *seed to serve him* till his second coming, that *shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation*, Psal. xxii. 30, 31. as they shall come and *declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born*, and the *people that shall be created shall praise him* on earth, while others, that are gone before, are praising him in heaven, &c. Psal. cii. 18. We have reason from such promises of the word to conclude, that among the instances of grace already made, *Yet there is room.*

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We are bid to *pray*, that *God's kingdom may come*, which hath a special reference to the *kingdom of grace*, Mat. vi. 10. that this may be set up in our hearts, and advanc'd and enlarg'd in the world, by bringing in sinners to subjection to Christ: and as 'tis a prayer our Lord gave his disciples, as a standing pattern and rule of prayer for all after time, it may be put up in faith and hope of a gracious answer, by new additions to the Redeemer's kingdom, as of *the increase of his government*, 'tis promised *there shall be no end*, Isa. ix. 7.

This kingdom is not yet filled: 'tis capable of increase, both in *number* and *perfection*. And this we are to mean, in praying it may come: that the gospel may be sent where it is not, and succeeded where it is, to the *opening of sinners eyes*, and *translating them from the powers of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear son*, Col. i. 13. That such as are strangers to the name and profession of Christ, may be brought into the visible church, and they that have only a *form of Godliness* may, by the powerful grace of the holy spirit, be made members of the *church invisible*; in both which there is yet room.

The sanctuary door is open, in which there are ordinances, to which all are to be admitted; such as prayer, hearing the word read and preached, &c. And they who, in attending upon these, have been brought to see their need of Christ, and accept of him as offer'd in the gospel, proving it by a suitable walk, may and ought to come to his table, in the most solemn manner, to renew their baptismal covenant, and

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as the children of God, receive the confirming seal of all the privileges belonging to such. In the household of faith, thus there is room.

Lastly, *There is yet room in the mansions of glory.*

Our blessed Lord, when going from hence to heaven, thus takes his leave, for a time, of his sorrowing disciples : *In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,* John xiv. 2, 3. This promise concerns not only those to whom it was then given, but is a ground on which all that here stand in a special relation to Christ, may safely build their hope, of being in heaven with him. None that in this life are made *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, shall be denied admission and entertainment there, Col. i. 12. Into the *New Jerusalem* above, Rev. ii. 7. the *paradise of God*, there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, Rev. xxi. 27. But blessed are they that do his commandments : *believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ*, Rev. xxii. 14. and walk as such, *that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city*, 1 John iii. 23. where every one that *overcometh* shall be made a *pillar in the temple of God*, and go out no more, Rev. iii. 12.

Christ speaks of all his disciples as *brethren*, and declares, for their common encouragement and comfort, as going to glory, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God*,
John

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John xx. 17. And God is not *ashamed* to own the relation, or be called *their God*; for he hath prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 16. In that City, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Isa. lxiv. 4. But all that are of that number shall know, by possession, what it means.

Believers common happiness lies within the veil, *whither the forerunner is for us enter'd, even Jesus our everlasting high-priest*; and with this character he being gone before, none belonging to him, in any age or place, shall be forgotten, but drawn up after him in the appointed season.

All the members of Christ's mystical body, shall be with their ascended Lord and head. Many of them are already so, and the rest in the order fix'd, shall be sure to follow; *singly* as to the soul at death: and soul and body *united*, and the *whole* company of the *faithful* compleat, at the *last day*.

Every believer is given to Christ, as to both parts, soul and body; and for both worlds: and as *all that the father giveth him shall come to him*, so all that come to him shall be together with him. He confirms his disciples in the faith and expectation of this, by declaring, as sent from heaven, *to do the will of his father, This is the father's will which hath sent me; that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day*. And then this farther is the will of him that sent me, *that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life*, John vi. 37---40. He came the *first*
[L 4] *time*

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time to pay the price of heaven, and the ransom of those that were given him; and having seen the travel of his soul, *Isa. liii. 10.* in their effectual calling and conversion, he *will appear the second time*, to conduct them in triumph to the purchased kingdom, *Heb. ix. 28.* where he may have the satisfaction of *their* company, and they the happiness of *his* for ever. Love to them, and what he has done and undertaken for them, lead to this, and will certainly infer it. As he was pleased with the thoughts of being with them, before he came into the world, *Prov. viii. 31.* so as going out of it, to the glory he had before, he puts it into his valedictory prayer, that they may be with him. *Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me,* John xvii. 24.

'Twas for the *bringing of many sons unto glory*, that the *captain of their salvation is made perfect, through suffering*, *Heb. ii. 10.* And as some of them will be found alive at the second coming, *1 Thess. iv. 17.* for these, and as many as, till the winding up of time, the Lord our God shall call, we have ground to say, there is yet room in heaven, *Acts ii. 29.* This will be true, as long as there are any of God's chosen unborn, or being born, uncalled; or when called, as yet in a state of trial and probation, which hath a reference and tendency to a better one above, where provision is made for their universal reception and abode. How many soever, *through faith and patience*, are gone before, *to inherit the promises*, *Heb. vi. 12.* we trust, the number of
those

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those who are, and shall be *heirs of salvation*, will be found to be very considerable, *Heb. i. 14.* whom *angels*, by appointment, will *minister* to by the *way*, and Jesus Christ receive in the *end*. The kingdom of grace shall be still emptying into the kingdom of glory, and heaven stand open, till the last saint be enter'd in.

We are assured, that in the *presence of God there is fulness of joy*, *Psal. xvi. 11.* which will not be lessened by the number of possessors. They that are already there, shall have nothing taken off from their felicity, by the coming of others: nor need they, who at any time, see themselves in the narrow way that *leads to life*, *Mat. vii. 14.* admit a suspicion, that their entrance shall be prevented, or the happy seats be all fill'd by such as have got the start of them, and are gone before.

Heaven is vastly large and capacious: the *sealed and saved of God* make a *multitude which no man can number*, *Rev. vii. 9.* but there are mansions enough for them all: places prepared and reserved against the coming of the children of the kingdom that are yet behind, *who are also kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation*, *1 Pet. i. 4, 5.* so that possession is sure. At whatsoever distance, as to time and place, they move thro' this world, the ransom'd of the Lord shall meet at last, in one general body, *Isa. xxxv. 10.* when *he who hath kept them from falling*, will *present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy*, *Jude xxiv.* There angels and saints shall be together, and find room enough. As noting the certainty of this, the
church

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church *militant* and *triumphant*, are spoken of as one : and believers said to be *come unto Mount Sion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ; and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven : to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 22--24. whose blood open'd the way to this, and tells all his members, that the promise of it is sealed, and shall be made good. To all this they are come by *relation* and title, and begun participation now ; and in faith and hope of the rest, as these shall, e'er long, be changed for sight and full fruition : upon which they shall all join in the triumphant song, saying, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever*, Rev. v. 13.

Thus I have gone through the first general, shewing, in six instances, where there is room. Namely, in the mercy of God : in the merits of Christ : as to the efficacy of the spirit, to renew and change the heart, which spirit may be had : in the covenant of grace : in the household of faith : and in the mansions of glory. And what I have said under each of these, I trust, has been supported and put beyond doubt, from the word of God.

That it may be known who may take encouragement from hence, the next thing is to tell you,

II. *For whom there is room.*

In

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In general, there is room for all sorts and degrees of men: those of one kingdom and country as well as another: for *Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free*, as many as in every age and place can be persuaded to come in, *Col. iii. 11.* This is the gospel sent into all the world, and to be preach'd to every human creature, capable of hearing it: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned,* Mark xvi. 16.

Particularly, to help you to find your case.

1. *There is room for the meanest and most despicable in the world.*

The *poor*, and the *maimed*, and the *halt*, and the *blind*, are the persons the servant is bid to bring in, and whether taken properly, or in a metaphorical sense, it so far comes to one, as they may be understood to be such as have nothing to recommend them: nay, who labour under various defects, for which, among men, they may be neglected and despised. But no disadvantages, as to mind or body, or circumstances, shall be objected against them by him, *who seeth not as man seeth, and with whom there is no respect of persons,* 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

Those things have been bid from the wise and prudent, that have been revealed unto babes, Eph. vi. 9. *Even so, O Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight,* Mat. xi. 25. Persons of the greatest note and eminence for wisdom or wealth, or power, or honour, have not been the most ready to come to the gospel-feast, or the most numerous guests there. *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* On the
the

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the contrary, we are told, *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence,* 1 Cor. i. 26---29.

The grace of God is free, and prov'd to be so, in pitching upon those whom man would pass by. The poor, and the maim'd, creatures obscure and worthless, and wretched, are expressly named in the commission, seriously called, and shall be as welcome to share in the common salvation, as the most considerable upon earth.

Poor fishermen are chosen to preach the gospel, and the poor are taken notice of, as those that receive it, and are readily received to all the grace revealed and tendered in it: the lowness of their rank being no bar to their admission to the entertainments of heaven. The apostle mentions this as a thing known, and of use to be consider'd, that they may not be slighted whom God is so ready to accept. *Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him,* James ii. 5.

Poor *Lazarus*, that is laid as a beggar at the rich man's gate, wanting the crumbs that fall from his table, and full of sores, so as to draw the dogs about him, is nevertheless the object of God's love, whilst he lived, and when he died, is carried by angels into *Abraham's* bosom: how despicable soever, he is taken into the kingdom
of

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of grace and glory : and there is still room for persons, as low and loathsome as he.

The church is called the congregation of the poor, of God's poor : not that all the people of God are mean in the world, as 'tis visible, that all that are poor, are not partakers of grace : but it plainly intimates, that there are poor, and a considerable number of them, that God has a special interest in, a peculiar relation to ; and that there is room for such as are of the lowest rank, to be thus advanced.

Our blessed Lord, whilst on earth, is so poor, as to say of himself, *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests : but the son of man hath not where to lay his head*, Mat. viii. 20. And when this was the condition of the head of the church, he will not for this reject any such from being his members. Be not therefore discouraged, tho' your external circumstances are pressing and strait : but bless God, and take comfort, that how destitute soever of silver and gold, you stand as fair for grace and heaven as any other.

2. *The rich are not under a necessity of perishing : there is room for them.*

'Tis indeed a solemn and awful declaration that our Lord delivers concerning such, saying, * *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*, Mat. xix. 24. This seems to set them past hope. But Christ herein uses, or alludes to

* The Hebrew proverb spake of an elephant, which Christ might change for a camel, as fitly representing a man laden with thick clay, carrying burdens more for others than for himself.

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a proverb among the *Jews*; whereby, under terms of absolute impossibility, they would denote a thing in the last degree difficult, or impossible only in a sense, *viz.* without the interposition of the divine power. And therefore when his disciples, at the hearing of this, were exceedingly amazed, saying, *Who then can be saved?* Jesus answers, *With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* By the disciples asking, who then can be saved? they seem to be gone into the opinion, that the rich were the most favoured of God in this world; or however, that they stood fairest for a better, as having the greatest advantages for their souls. They are sensible, that other conditions had their snares and temptations, as well as theirs who had great abundance, and that there might be the predominant love and desire of this, where there was not the possession: and if these things so greatly endangered the souls of the rich, they could not but be in pain for the rest, and discover some doubt, of the happiness of any. Our Lord looking upon them, and observing the working of their thoughts, so far yields as to intimate, that were men left to themselves, considering what they were to be kept from, and wrought to, there would be reason enough to ask, *Who then can be saved?* And the answer must be, *none.* But that which cannot be done by human power, may be expected from divine omnipotent grace; and thus persons of all ranks, and even the rich, may be brought to heaven.

The reason of the particular difficulty in their case, is mentioned in the other Evangelists, *viz.* their

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their trust in riches, which 'tis hard to move them from, and bring them to choose, and trust and rest in God as their portion, and so deny themselves, and act accordingly, as those that believe that God is infinitely better in himself, and better to them than all the world. This is to be the prevailing sense and practice of all that are saved: but how insufficient is human persuasion to lead to it, or any thing short of the power of God? Hence, in *St. Mark*, we read Jesus answered thus, *How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God*, Mark x. 25. And because this is what great possessions so naturally and strongly lead to, in *St. Luke*, 'tis put upon the *having* them: *How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God*, Luke xviii. 23. 'Tis hard to have riches, and not trust in them. 'Tis hard to bring men off from such a trust, which yet must be done, or salvation is impossible. 'Tis more conceivable that a * camel, or cable-rope (as some will read it) should pass thro' the eye of a needle, than that a rich man, trusting in his riches, should without a change, enter into heaven. And if hereupon the question be, who can prevent or cure this? It may be answered, God. The difficulty, tho' great and insuperable to us, is not

* Κάμηλος, without straining it to κάμυλος, some will have to signify both a camel and a cable-rope, and choose the latter, as agreeable to the Syriack and Arabick versions, besides that, as noted by Buxtorf, 'tis used by the Jews, in the same proverbial way: but as to the difficulty, 'tis designed to intimate, either reading make it much the same, *i. e.* such as is not in an ordinary way to be overcome. *Vid.* Whitby's Annot. in *Mat.* xix. 24.

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so to him: is there any thing too hard for the Lord ?

Notwithstanding the tendency of riches, to fix their owners at a distance from Christ, and fill with difficulty their way to heaven, this does not speak a danger that is a just ground of despair. Though not many mighty, not many noble are called, 'tis not said there are none. *Abraham* was rich and righteous too; considerable, by the blessing of God, in this world, and heir to a better, in the faith of which he lived and died, and then exchange'd his faith for sight and possession. The parable takes care to fix him afar off from the place of torment, that we may conceive of him in heaven, at the same time that it tells us of the nameless rich man, one of his posterity, in hell.

In the language of scripture, the state of happiness above, is represented by *Abraham's* bosom, and from this none shall be excluded, upon the account of their rank, who inherit his faith. Both grace here, and glory hereafter, are among the things, in the participation of which the rich and poor may meet together. *Lazarus* of *Bethany*, whose circumstances enable him to be hospitable to others, is said to be *one whom Jesus loved*; which is understood of a special affection, and as a true believer in Christ, 'tis not doubted, he is now with him, as well as *Lazarus* the beggar, who dying, is carried by angels to heaven.

The possession or want of outward riches, will by no means warrant any to cast off all hope

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of having the better ones that relate to the soul and eternity.

Wealth may be accompanied with grace, and thereby the *mammon of unrighteousness* (riches call'd by that name) so managed, as that the faithful stewards, when failing here, may find *friends to receive them into everlasting habitations.*

The precious things of heaven, and those of the earth, come into the blessing upon Joseph, Deut. xxxiii. 13. And after 'tis said to prevail to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, 'tis moreover crown'd with the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, the favour of the everlasting God.

Grace has effectually taught some, and can influence more, amidst the largest possessions on earth, to have their eye on a better country that is a heavenly; and as pilgrims and strangers, to take the way of self-denial to it, counting this their greatest advantage by a fair estate, that they had something of value to use for Christ, and after all, to esteem as nothing in comparison of him. Thus faith proves their victory over the world, and has an honour raised to it, in keeping it out of their hearts, when they have most of it in their hands.

'Tis indeed sadly true, that the prosperity of fools often destroys them; but 'tis owing to their folly that it does so. There's no need of a messenger from the dead to give them warning of their danger. They may learn this from the word, and what course is to be taken to prevent their ruin. Watchfulness and prayer, and setting themselves to improve the helps offered, would

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engage God on their side to keep them safe; and the neglect of these, thro' the sollicitations of flesh and sense, which by what they have of the world, they are capable to indulge, leaves them without excuse.

They that have most of the good things of this life, need not, unless they will, take them for their portion. The earth is indeed given to the children of men, but not to be to them instead of God. They might easily know that a portion ought to be an adequate abiding thing: but the *fashion* of this world is passing away, and they are going out of it they know not how soon, and tho' God fill their bellies with his hid treasure, 'tis strange they need be told, that they have souls to be provided for, which none of these things can suit or satisfy.

'Tis however plainly declared, that *here is not their rest*; and therewith the call urged to arise and look out after something better, which is also held up before them; life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel: And 'tis the making light of this, and cleaving to present enjoyments as their happiness, that is their undoing. Upon this ground, Christ pronounces a *woe* unto the *rich*, as *having received their consolation*; but this by no means belongs to them, who knowing the emptiness of all this world, with *Luther*, humbly profess they will not be put off with it.

3. *The afflicted must not be forgotten, there is room for them.*

The pains of the body are no proof, that God will have no mercy upon the soul: nor is it to be taken as the import of the troubles that may
be

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be the lot of any in the present life, that they are lost, as to eternity. Both grace and glory have followed, where affliction has gone before, and they would go too fast, who from being *cast down*, should hastily conclude, that they are therefore *cast off*.

Some of God's chosen have been in the furnace of affliction, as *David, Hezekiah, Job*: others he has chosen, *i. e.* called there in pursuit of his eternal choice, *causing them to pass under the rod*, and, *so bringing them into the bond of the covenant*, Ezek. xx. 37. And as to every soul recovered, *his gifts and calling are without repentance*.

4. There is yet room for *such as have long stood out, neglecting and making light of the invitation sent*. Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. To-day, after so long a time, if ye will hear his voice, barden not your hearts, and all former refusals shall be forgiven, Heb. iv. 7. After much patience, this is the voice of the compassionate Redeemer, *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. iii. 20.

5. There is yet room for *such as have backsliden, and have foully fallen after hopeful beginnings*. Thus God vouchsafes to call after them, *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*: and how readily should the answer that follows be taken up by all such: *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God*, Jer. iii. 22. The time would fail me to mention the particular instances, to whom I might distinctly

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Speak by way of encouragement from the word of God. Wherefore,

Lastly, To add no more : There is yet room for the chief of sinners. To denote this, the gospel proclaiming pardon and peace, is ordered to be preach'd *first* at *Jerusalem*, among sinners of the deepest dye, as having been concerned in crucifying of the *Lord of glory*, Luke xxiv. 47. that from the offer of mercy to these, none that come after might reckon themselves left to despair. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. and some of the *chief* of sinners are recorded, as having *obtained mercy for a pattern to them, which should afterwards believe on him to everlasting life* : Repentance and remission of sins being still to be preached in his name among all nations.

We read but of *one sin* that sets the guilty beyond the reach of mercy, *viz.* the sin unto death, from which (without entring at present into its notion) they may conclude themselves free, who credit what the Gospel reveals concerning Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of Men, and are seriously concerned about securing an interest in him, as *there is salvation in no other*.

Whenever any of the foregoing sorts, or any other that can be nam'd, are brought to see their vileness, and feel their misery, so as to ask with earnestness what they shall do to be saved ; instead of raising or listening to objections to feed despair, they have that in their case that may greatly strengthen their hope, as they may hear Christ's voice directed to them, as it were by
name,

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name, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls*, Mat. xi. 28. That rest that is to be had in no other, and in which your happiness shall be begun, that shall one day be perfected, and set above all fears and doubts forever.

Having thus shewn for *whom* there is room, as well as *where*, I shall close all with a brief

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. How justly may the gospel be call'd a joyful sound; and with what thankfulness should it be heard and entertain'd, that at once assures us, that all things are *ready* relating to sinners salvation and happiness, and that yet there is *room*. How joyful a sound would it be reckon'd by the spirits in prison, could it be proclaimed among them with truth, that the door of hope was still open.

2. *With what cheerfulness should gospel-ministers address themselves to the work of winning souls, upon this ground, that yet there is room*: which they may firmly conclude, the wisdom and goodness of God will, in the fittest season, fill up; and therefore his word shall not always return empty, but accomplish the end for which it is sent.

3. By this you may be enabled to silence the suggestions of Satan, and your own misgiving thoughts, "That 'tis too late to repent or fly to Christ: that the day of grace is over: that you are not elected, and so shall not be saved, do what you can, &c." Instead of entring into a dispute about what is not revealed, answer

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all your desponding fears, from what is plain in the word of God ; *yet there is room.* And why should I shut the door of hope against myself, when God hath set it open.

4. *Let none take encouragement from hence, to make light of the gospel-invitation, or delay to close with it.* Yet there is room, but you know not, as to particular persons, how long, or little while it may be so. Yet there is room in the *kingdom of grace and glory* ; but remember, there is room in the *grave and hell* too, and how many have sunk into both, whilst they have put off their repentance, and looking after an interest in Christ, and so have fallen under double condemnation, for *neglecting so great salvation.* Be wise in time, and strive to enter in at the strait gate, lest you come at last with fruitless cries, when the door is shut.

5. *This may support the hopes of such as are recovered, as to their friends and relations, yet un-called.*

It can't but be grievous to a believer to think, what glorious provision is made in the gospel, and that there are such and such dear to him as his own soul, that are without any part or lot in the matter. Well, blessed be God, may such a one say, I have no reason to give them up for lost. I will pray for them, and plead with them, and wait in hope of a blessed issue, *yet there is room.*

Lastly, Being called into the kingdom of grace, and finding there is room ; let this confirm your faith and hope, as to your reception to glory.

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Often send up your desires after it: O Lord, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness and thy goodness too; I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond *Jordan*, that goodly Mount *Sion*, and the city of the living God.

Let your hearts and conversations be there, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as you are passing to it: and whatever straitness you feel below, as to your own souls, or what you expect from heaven, be comforted with the thought, that there will be more room and larger communications above.

Let all the graces that accompany salvation, dwell in your hearts, and shine through your lives; adorning your character as the children of God; and tho' it *does not yet appear what you shall be*, you may be satisfied in this, that *when he shall appear, you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2.

The METHOD.

THE text considered as part of a parable, in which much of the mystery of the gospel is contained. page 131

The comfortable truth laid down as the ground of the discourse, viz. Whatever has been the success of the gospel for the time past, you may yet come in and be graciously received, and for ever saved. 132

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Only one sin cuts off from hope of mercy: the notion of it wav'd: but to remove tormentful fear, 'tis intimated, who have reason to conclude themselves free. 180

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1. The gospel is, and to be esteem'd a joyful sound.
 2. The ministers of the gospel have reason, with cheerfulness, to address themselves to the work of winning souls; their labour shall not be wholly in vain.
 3. Sinners are not from things secret, to shut the door of hope against themselves, which the word of God reveals as open.
 4. No ground to make light of the gospel-invitation, or delay to close with it. As there is room not only in the kingdom of grace and heaven, but in the grave and hell too: presumptuous sinners in danger of dropping into both. 182
 5. Such as are themselves recovered, not to give up their friends and relations yet uncall'd, for lost.
- Lastly, Believers entertainment in the kingdom of grace, to confirm their faith and hope, as to their reception to glory.

*The Believer's Triumph, knowing
his Redeemer liveth.*

A
S E R M O N
FOR THE
*Christian's Consolation, as afflicted
and dying.*

The P R E F A C E.

NOT long since I published a discourse under the title of,
The Door of Hope yet open, designed as a remedy
against despair: the good I am made believe that has done,
encourages me so soon to send this after it, wherein I aim at
being a helper of the christian's Joy.

It goes abroad in the same plainness in which 'twas preach'd,
which I made conscience not to alter, as therein it had been
succeeded to the most desirable end: a young person, who I
doubt not lately went to heaven, daughter to a late worthy
minister near London, owning on her death-bed, that it had
pleased God to make it the means of her conversion, and in
hope it might be of use to others, desired the same might be
preach'd at her funeral. And while I have the satisfaction of
seeing the pleasure of the Lord in any degree made to prosper
in my hand, and therein an evidence of the approbation of
heaven, I am unmov'd by all the malignant breath in the
world, for preaching not myself but Christ Jesus the Lord:
and standing up for the truth as it is in Jesus: My witness
is in heaven, and my record is on high, Job xvi. 19. I know
that my Redeemer liveth.

D. W.

J O B xix. 25. former Part.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth.

TH E S E are the words of holy Job, to which, by the most solemn introduction, he invites a special regard. He here utters what he thought would bear him out in wishing so earnestly as he does; *Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever!* Upon which the text comes in as the reason of all, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

This, and the two following verses, you may read, as containing a *confession of his faith*, and the ground of his support and comfort in his distressed state; and as *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*, and *dying is the way of all the earth*, Job v. 7. you will not think the query unseasonable, *What may be our common and effectual relief?* And to this I think the answer is plain from the passage before us, namely, *To know that our Redeemer liveth.*

What has been of use to holy men that are gone before, to keep them from fainting, as afflicted and dying, may be so to us, as liable to the same; and 'tis with this design that the examples and experiences of the saints are so carefully recorded and transmitted to us, that *we thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4.

Now

knowing his Redeemer liveth. 187

Now you have heard of the patience of Job, James 5. 11. which was truly eminent and famous, as was his misery, and the foundation of this was his *faith in Christ*, who is here spoken of according to his *office*; apprehending his special interest in him, and having an eye to the future eternal blessedness, to which he trusted to be raised by him, tho' now lying in the dust. The eminency of his *faith*, strengthen'd his *patience*, and made way for its *having its perfect work*, James i. 4. as no trial shall be too hard for them who endure, *as seeing him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27.

Under the painful effects of Satan's rage and God's afflicting hand, the violence of enemies, and the hard censures of friends; what he had already felt, or was farther liable to, till death and the grave had done their worst; this is that which keeps him from fainting, and calms and comforts his soul, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

"How low soever I am fallen, I am not lost.

"*Tho' I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,*

"I can look thro' to the Lord of life. With what-

"ever dark clouds I am encompass'd upon *earth*,

"I have a brighter prospect from *heaven*. There

"is a *ransom found* on which I rely; a Saviour

"provided in whom I trust, and have abun-

"dant reason to do so, in that he *lives and lives*

"for *me*; of which I have a comfortable per-

"suasion, as under the influence of his grace,

"I have accepted and chosen him for *mine*, and

"given up myself unto him; and would never

"retract my consent and choice, *for I know that*

"*my Redeemer liveth.* I know and love and be-

"lieve

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“ lieve in him ; I adhere to, and depend upon
 “ him, and will always do so, in hope of seeing
 “ him at last, and being happy with him, how-
 “ ever it go with me now.

“ I am not rejected of God, tho’ sorely af-
 “ flicted. Tho’ he has *cast me down*, he has
 “ not *cast me off*, nor ever will. There is a
 “ *Redeemer that lives for ever*, and is *mine for*
 “ *ever*, and in his hands I entrust my soul, my
 “ cause, and all my concerns ; my happiness
 “ and hope for *time* and for *eternity* ; and tho’
 “ I feel myself sinking into the grave, and e’er
 “ long expect to lie down there ; this is my re-
 “ viving cordial, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

In the words, tho’ few, several *observations* are obvious ; as,

I. From the very sad and sorrowful state in which *Job* utters this, we may note, that *afflictions do not dissolve the endeared relation between the Redeemer and redeemed, Christ and believers.*

Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end ; and as he *died*, so he *lives for them*, John xiii. 1. Tho’ upon a throne, he does not forget his servants on a dunghill ; will not disown or cast them off ; gives them liberty of access unto him, and leave to encourage themselves in him as *their merciful Redeemer, the Lord their God* ; and has often enabled them to say, from sweet experience, that he *considers their trouble, and knows their soul in adversity*, Ps. xxxi. 7.

His esteem of his followers does not rise and fall with their outward condition in the world ; and as what they here suffer, is no *sign*, so it is no *cause* of the alienation of his favour from them.

His

His heart is as full of love, and that love often more freely manifested *in adversity*, than ever in a more *prosperous state*; as when *Stephen* is about to be stoned to death, *heaven* opens over his head, and he *sees Jesus standing* for him *at the right hand of God*, Acts vii. 55, 56. As he chooses none, or sets his love upon them because they are high, or of figure in the world, so neither will he turn away from the people of his choice because *they are mean*; but in every state, this is his promise to the believer as such, being called into *fellowship with him*, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5.

Tho' earthly friends may grow strange to us in distress, when blasted by providence, or strip'd of outward comforts, God and Christ will not do so. A child in God's family, however reduc'd or tried, is a child still, and the throne of his heavenly Father stands open to him, as a *throne of grace*, to which, in the name of Christ, the *great high priest over the house of God*, he may at all times approach, with hope of acceptance, welcome and success, praying as *David*, *Lord, save me, I am thine*, Ps. cxix. 94. and from the mutual relation may conclude as the church, *My God will hear me*, Mich. vii. 7.

David, when at the lowest, *encourages himself in the Lord, as his God*, and records it to the praise of condescending grace, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles*, Ps. xxxiv. 6. His voice that would have been despised upon earth, goes up with acceptance before the throne, being the voice of a *child* to a tender father. And *Job*
when

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when so *poor* as to be no longer able to say, *my* estate, *my* children, *my* health or ease, *my* honour or friends, nor scarcely *my* life, could yet say *my* Redeemer still. And this the meanest faint may now say, as well as any that are gone before, having the same compassionate Saviour, Jesus Christ both *theirs* and *ours*, whose love and union to his members will at no time fail or be broken off; so that all that are brought into the number may sing in company, *This God is our God for ever and ever*, Ps. xlviii. 14. and add every one for himself, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour*, Luke i. 46, 47.

2. Considering the *person* that here makes so glorious a confession of his faith, and the *early days* in which he lived, even long before our Lord's coming in the flesh, observe, that *Jesus Christ as he is the only Redeemer of fallen Man has been all along so, even from the beginning.*

Having undertaken to *assume* our nature and die in our *room*, he is spoken of as the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8.

To this end he was promised immediately on the fall, and holy men, in every age, expected and waited for him, and died in the faith of his coming, as wherein the word of God should not fail of being accomplished.

Abraham, by *Christ's* own testimony, *rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it and was glad*, John viii. 56. And *Job*, whose days are reckon'd between *Abraham* and *Moses*, could then look *upward to heaven* and say, *My Redeemer liveth*; and look *forward to his standing in the latter day*

knowing his Redeemer liveth. 191

upon the earth, owning and calling him God, who in time was to become Man.

Believers, how many and distant soever, have from *first to last* the same Saviour; they who liv'd in the *beginning*, and we whose lot is cast in the *end* of the world. *Jesus*, as to the one and other, is *alpha* and *omega*, the *beginning* and the *end*. By him all are saved that are gone to heaven, and all must be that expect to follow. And we are assured *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. There *neither* is, nor has been, *salvation in any other*, so that the many sons brought to glory, in a sense of their common obligation to him, shall at last join in the same praising song, *Hosanna to the son of David, hosanna in the highest; for thou wast slain and has redeemed us to God with thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation*: Rev. v. 9. *salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb*, Rev. vii. 10.

3. From the manner of expression, I know, observe that *a believer may attain a comfortable evidence of a special relation to Christ and interest in him.*

Where such a relation is founded it may be discerned, and they that are *apprehended of Christ as his*, be able to say that he also is *theirs*, Phil. iii. 12.

Such a knowledge we are *commanded*, and highly concerned to look after. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove yourselves, know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

This

This we have *means* and many advantages for, and the greatest encouragement to, which should excite the utmost diligence to get into such a relation to Christ, and such an assurance concerning it; that it may be said of us with reference to him, *whom having not seen, ye love; in whom tho' now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. But this leads to *that* which I design as the ground of my present discourse, *viz.*

4. *A believer knowing his Redeemer liveth, hath therein a spring of abundant consolation, whatever affliction he here labours under, or is liable to.*

This refreshes the sorrows of holy *Job*, and creates a calm in his troubled soul, so that whatever dejection his discourses savour of before, we after this, meet with no more of that kind to the end of the book: and if we could point to the christian, who like *Job* might be stript of his dearest enjoyments, and loaded with all the miseries upon earth; tho' his outward comforts drop off likes *leaves* in *autumn*, and troubles roll in as the waves of the sea, breaking one in the neck of another; such a one hath enough still to support his soul, and keep his hope from *dying*, who can look up and say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

In speaking to this, I shall shew,

I. *How the title of Redeemer belongs to Christ.*

II. *That believers will and ought to betake themselves to him for relief under all their troubles.*

III. *That 'tis of powerful use to the consolation of such to know that he liveth, and that he is theirs.*

IV. *How*

IV. *How a christian may fetch suitable support from hence in troubles that may most affect him whilst he lives, and even when he comes to die.*

I. *How the title of Redeemer belongs to Christ.*

The word here rendred *Redeemer* in the original signifies a * *kinsman* ; and tho' 'tis probable Job's life and sufferings, recorded in this book, might precede the giving of the law to the children of Israel concerning the office of a *kinsman* ; yet it may be now explained by what was the part of a *kinsman* among that people ; namely to redeem the person or possession of a brother when sold or detained, and set them free, Ruth iii. 9---13. and iv. 1---3.

Now in allusion to this, Christ is fitly called our *Redeemer*, upon a threefold account, viz.

In regard of the bondage-state he finds us in.

His relation to us, and

What, in that relation, he does for us.

I. *In regard of the bondage miserable state he finds us in.*

Having by wilful transgression fallen from God, we forfeited our inheritance into the hands of justice ; and for our persons, as guilty malefactors, we became liable to his flaming wrath, without hope of heaven, and bound over to an everlasting hell, having no way in our power to escape.

And as we are subjected to the threatenings of the law, so we fell under the tyranny of Satan too, who reigns in and over the children of dis-

* *Lex.* Redemptor seu Propinquus, i. e. talis redemptor qui jure consanguinitatis rem aut personam fratris, aut proximi cognati venditam redimit, captam liberat, &c.

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obedience in order to their ruin. This is our condition by nature, and if ever any needed to be redeemed, 'tis we.

2. *Such is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that he stoops into a near relation to us; becomes by incarnation our kinsman after the flesh, that he might have right to redeem.*

If ever we are recovered, the same nature that sinn'd must also suffer. Wherefore forasmuch as the children to be redeemed were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that being Emmanuel, God-with-us, we might not be left without help or hope, Heb. ii. 14.

3. Being enter'd into the relation, he performs the part of a kinsman, redeeming us from our state of bondage and misery, and this two ways.

viz. By $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{price and} \\ \text{power.} \end{array} \right.$

(1.) *By paying the price of our redemption, and this the greatest that ever was laid down: For we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, 1 Pet. i. 18.*

Without blood there is no remission, Heb. ix. 22. and his only is available to make atonement for sin, and merit the happiness we had forfeited as sinners; and this being shed, peace is made, the covenant of grace confirm'd, and therein pardon and life freely offer'd to such as were by nature children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3. who hereupon are exhorted to turn into their strong hold, as prisoners of hope, Zec. ix. 12. to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ

as their only refuge, in whom we have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sin, Col. i. 14.

(2.) To compleat our recovery and fulfil his office, he also rescues us by power from the tyranny of Satan; compelling that potent malicious enemy to let his captives go.

Christ's satisfaction to his Father, whom we had so greatly offended, made way for his conquest over the powers of darkness, by which we were overcome and brought into bondage, 1 Pet. ii. 19. that we might no longer be led captive by the Devil at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. but they whom the Son makes free might be free indeed, John viii. 36.

This was the end and fruit of his assuming our nature in order to suffer, that by death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil, Heb. ii. 14. overthrow his authority as the executioner of wrath, and prevent the ruining effects of his malice and rage, as to all that believe. He spoiled principalities and powers, exposing them to shame, and publicly triumphing over them upon the cross, Col. ii. 15. and being now ascended up on high, exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, he pursues the victory by opening sinners eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. binds the strong man armed, and takes his goods, which he unjustly detain'd, and kept in destructive peace, Mat. xii. 29.

Thus by price and by power, as a lamb and as a lion, (appeasing God and) conquering Satan, purchasing heaven and delivering from hell, is the great Emmanuel become our Redeemer; thanks

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be to God that help is laid upon one so mighty to save.

II. *Believers will and ought to betake themselves to Christ the living Redeemer for relief and comfort under all their troubles.* They are sensible of their necessity and obligation to do so. In that

1. *As fallen creatures, there is no coming unto the Father but thro' a mediator, in the name of a Redeemer, in Job's language, a days-man between us, to lay his hand upon us both, Job. ix. 33.*

2. *Christ is the only Mediator between God and man; such a redeemer as there is no other.* To him therefore we are to look for deliverance from evil, or support under it, with whatever other mercies we desire or need. As he is head over all things to the church, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

3. *He is provided and exalted of God to this very end, that the weary and heavy laden, under whatever burden, might apply to him for ease and rest, and hereby honour the Son as they honour the Father.* Immediately on the fall, when man was in the deepest distress, he is promised, as our recovering head, the refuge and hope of helpless sinners: such are invited and encouraged by himself to come to him, and the promise stands firm, *whosoever believeth on him shall not be left ashamed, 1 Pet. ii. 6.*

4. *To them that believe he is precious, from the experience they have had of his power and grace, 1 Pet. ii. 7.* They have often found his promise fulfil'd, that tho' trouble was what they were to expect in the world, in him they should have peace, John xvi. 33. which draws forth their desires after

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after him, fixes their eyes upon him, confirms their trust in him, as able and ready to succour and save whatever distress they may be in; and should they be ask'd upon any occasion, if they would turn their Backs upon him, and go to any other, how readily would they answer with *Peter, Lord, to whom should we go! Thou hast the words of eternal life.* John vi. 66.

III. 'Tis of powerful use to the consolation of believers, in looking to the provided Redeemer, to know that he liveth, and that he is theirs.

I. That he liveth.

This may be said of him

as { God, and
Emmanuel, God-man.

I. As God, or with reference to his *divine nature*, he is *from everlasting to everlasting*, the second person in the glorious *trinity*, equal and one with the *Father* and *Holy Spirit*, the same eternal, only living and true God. The word *was God*, as well as *with him*, John i. 1. and having in the covenant of redemption undertaken our recovery, he speaks of himself as *set up from everlasting*, Prov. viii. invested with the office he still wears, and appointed to the work, which in the fulness of time he came to *finish*. In this respect *Job* speaks of him, *my Redeemer liveth*, without any distinction of time past or to come, intimating the *eternal existence*, and therein the *deity* of him in whom he trusted for salvation, which as such an act of *faith* evidently implies, so he after expresses it too, *in my flesh shall I see God*. In regard of his *divinity*, Christ says of himself, *before Abraham was, I am*, John viii.

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58. it being always true of him *as God*, that he *is*, and now likewise.

2. As *Emmanuel, God with us*, it may be apply'd to him, our *Redeemer liveth*. He that appeared in the flesh, and died upon the cross, being risen and ascended, has sent us this reviving message, *I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, amen*, Rev. i. 18. And how much this conduceth to a believer's comfort, may appear from such *considerations as these*.

(1.) *As it speaks the value and efficacy of his death and sacrifice*; that what he has done and suffer'd is well-pleasing to God, and available for the recovery of fallen man. *He was deliver'd for our offences, and raised again for our Justification*, Rom. iv. 25. that our faith and hope might rise with him, as made *perfect* through his own suffering, to succour us under, and deliver us from *ours*, Heb. v. 9.

(2.) *His living again confirms the truth of his doctrine and promises*, as to what he *was*, and *would bestow on his believing followers, in this life and in another*. Tho' he was crucified and put to death as a mortal man, a vile malefactor, he is now declared to be *the Son of God with power, in his being raised from the dead*, Rom. i. 4. and we may safely rely upon him for temporal and eternal salvation, *being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more shall we be saved by his life*, Rom. v. 10.

(3.) 'Tis no small addition to a christian's comfort, that *Christ lives in heaven*. He has regain'd the *cœlestial paradise* that we had lost, and is
gone

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gone into it, and thither my faith and hope may ascend after him, and give me the chearful prospect that my Redeemer liveth in the highest dignity and dominion; to enjoy the purchase of his blood, accomplish the vast designs of his death, and see of the travel of his soul to his satisfaction, Isa. liii. 11. *Having by himself purged our sins, he is sate down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*, Heb. i. 3. *having all power in heaven and earth committed to him*, Mat. xxviii. 18. *to give eternal life to as many as believe in him*, John xvii. 2. which infers every thing else relating to their safety and support by the way.

He liveth, and is ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, John xx. 17. and by abiding with him, furnishes a conviction that his *righteousness* is perfect and *everlasting*, and so his interest above can never fail, John xvi. 8, 10.

He liveth, and is preparing mansions in the invisible glory, *whither, as Forerunner, he is for us enter'd*, John xiv. Heb. vi. 20. and has left this gracious promise to all his, that in the appointed season, he will come again, and *take them unto himself, that where he is they may be also*. And how calmly may they wait for this amidst all the trials of the present life, as he can never be unmindful of his word, or unfaithful to it?

He liveth, and appeareth in the presence of God for us, as our powerful mediator, Heb. ix. 24. and *advocate with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1. who we are assured *beareth him always*, and is ready for his sake to *supply all our wants*, accord-

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ing to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ, Phil. iv. 19.

He liveth as the fountain and principle of life to us, the *author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. and assures his disciples, that *because he liveth they shall live also*, John xiv. 19. and they may rest upon it, knowing that as he *liveth*, so

2. *He is theirs.* .E

This opens a way to that *strong consolation* provided for the *heirs of promise*, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them, and which they have abundant reason for who can say every one for himself, *I know, that my Beloved, my Saviour, my Redeemer is mine*, Cant. ii. 16. As to such,

He is theirs, whose riches are *unsearchable*, Eph. v. 8. and in whom all fulness dwells, Col. i. 19. whose saving power reacheth unto the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. and whose person is altogether lovely, Cant. v. 16. whose love is stronger than death, Cant. viii. 6. and when you have look'd with all saints, as far as you are able, into its length and breadth, and depth and height, still it exceeds and passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 18.

He is theirs by solemn call and appointment of the Father ; the *Beloved* in whom they are chosen and always accepted, Eph. i. 6.

He is theirs by voluntary undertaking their effectual recovery : He loved his church, and gave himself for it, and for every member of it, Eph. v. 25. laid down his life for the sheep, John x. 15. For their sakes he sanctified himself; John xvii. 19. carried them in his eye, and upon his heart

heart in all that he did and suffered, and has a constant regard to them in what he is now doing; and of all that the Father giveth him will lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day, John vi. 39.

He is *theirs* by covenant, tender and mutual consent, and so by an intimate and everlasting union, introduc'd by the *spirit* on his part, and *faith* on theirs, thus bespeaking the attracted soul in the language of love, *I will be for thee and not for another, so shalt thou also be for me*, Hos. iii. 3. to which the opening heart unfeignedly yields, and thereupon the dearest relation is founded.

He is *their* head and husband, physician and friend, their teacher, Saviour and Lord, their sacrifice, surety, ransom, advocate, every thing that their souls can need.

He is *theirs* to enlighten their minds, sanctify their hearts, pity their weakness, pardon their sins, hear their prayers, and send them help from heaven in every time of need; and having guided them by his counsel, even unto death, he is theirs afterwards to receive them to glory.

He is *theirs*, and his word and spirit, promises and providence, blessings temporal, spiritual and everlasting, are *theirs* too. Life is *theirs*, and so is death, things present and things to come, grace here and heaven at last; all things are *theirs*, who have *Christ* for *theirs*, 1 Cor. iii. 22.

What can be wanting to a believer's support, whatever he suffer, to whom all this belongs, and who has light to discern and appropriate it to himself? However afflicted, how calmly may he take up the Psalmist's words, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul! why art thou disquieted within*

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within me? Pf. xlii. 11. *The Lord is my portion, and the lot of mine inheritance; I know that my Redeemer liveth.* And so I come to what you will be particularly willing to hear, *viz.*

IV. Lastly, *How believers may fetch suitable support from hence, under the trials wherewith they may be most sorely press'd.*

I. I begin with *what they feel upon a publick account*; their tender sense of the church's troubles, and concern for their brethren in the same *household of faith*, by reason of the hard things they suffer, and the deep distress they are sometime brought into. When it goes ill with *Sion*, and *Babylon* triumphs, when Christ's interest runs low, the hearts of his disciples can't but be heavy; but the steady belief that the *Redeemer liveth*, will not suffer them to sink.

He liveth who purchased his church with his own blood; sanctified and cleansed it by his word and spirit, Acts xx. 28. and tho' gone to heaven, has not forsaken his *peculiar people*, nor carelessly left his *little flock* in the wilderness. He is sensible of what they suffer, and sympathizes with them, is more tenderly affected towards them than we can be, and has wise ends to accomplish in all that he suffers to befall them here.

Come then, O my soul, amidst all the sorrowful scenes below, look up to a *living Redeemer*; consider for what *end* and in what *capacity* he *liveth*, as *governour* of the world, and *head* of the church, to over-rule all things for her good, and therein advance the divine glory; for *in that* he *liveth*, *he liveth unto God*, Rom. vi. 10. sits enthron'd at his right hand with this assurance, that
all

all his *enemies shall be made his footstool*, Pf. cx. 1. Look up and consider his *power*, and then look into the *bible* and read his *promise*, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church*, Mat. xvi. 18. The *bush* may be all in a *flame*, Exod. iii. 2. but can never be *consumed* because of the *good-will* of *him* that *dwells* therein. His *flock*, tho' *little*, and living among wolves, has not yet been destroy'd, nor ever shall, for he is *with them alway*, *even to the end of the world*. As long as Christ lives, his interest upon earth cannot die.

He liveth, and has the turning of all the great wheels of providence; and how dark soever his dispensations may sometimes appear, they are all order'd by unerring wisdom to the best ends.

He liveth, and has the hearts of the greatest in his hands, to change their purposes, or check their *rage*, and will suffer no more to break out than will turn to his *praise*.

He liveth, and hath been with his people in former straits, all along watch'd over and preserv'd them notwithstanding the most threatening attempts, and he is still as able to save, and they are as dear to him as ever. Wherefore in the deepest sense of Sion's distress, let it silence all distrustful complaints, *He liveth who redeemeth Israel out of all his troubles*, Pf. xxv. 22.

2. *As to publick calamities that may happen in our day, or reach the place where our lot is cast*; tho' we should hear or be in the midst of wars and commotions, storms and tempests, pestilential diseases and desolating judgments, this is Christ's voice to all *his*, *Be not terrified*, Luke xxi. 9. and no reason has any one of them to be
so,

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so, who having an interest in him can say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

He liveth, who is the *Lord of hosts*, the *blessed and only potentate*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. whom the *winds and the sea obey*, and in whose hands I am always safe, *Mat. viii. 27.*

He liveth, without whose pleasure nothing can befall me, and whatever he pleases shall do so, his will is always best.

He liveth, who can set a mark upon my habitation as well as upon my soul, so that the destroying angel shall pass over, and he will do it if he see good; or if I should fall in a common ruin, and be swept away by a spreading deluge, *he liveth* from whose love nothing can separate my soul, and *with whom* to be is *far better*, by what means, or in what manner soever I am taken hence.

3. In *poverty and want*, pinching necessities and straits; tho' strip'd like *Job* of all earthly comforts, and lying with famishing *Lazarus* at the rich man's gate, begging in vain for crumbs, yet may I look up with comfort while able to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

He liveth whose eye sees and pities me in the dust, and whose ear is open to my cry, tho' man's is not.

He liveth, whose is the *earth and the fulness thereof*, Ps. xxiv. 1. who can send me food or sustain me without it; who satisfied *thousands* with a *few loaves and fishes*, John vi. and can as easily multiply mine as he did the *widow's oil*, and cause a *barrel of meal* to grow, 1 Kings xvii. 14---16.

He

He liveth, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, John vi. 55. and tho' here I die through want, I die in obedience to his voice, calling to me from heaven saying, Come up hither and I will satisfy thee with hidden manna, Rev. iv. 1. and cause thee to drink of the rivers of pleasure that everlastingly flow at the right hand of God, Rev. ii. 17.

4. *As to losses in substance, or near and dear relations, bodily pains and afflictions, the injuries and reproaches of enemies, and hard censures of friends, with what the christian may undergo from heaven; still he hath enough to feed his comfort, in being able to say, I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

He liveth, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, Is. liii. 3. who knows all my sufferings, and has the ordering of them; and tho' sense is ready to say all these things are against me, Gen. xlii. 36. I subscribe to it as a truth, that he hath done all these things well, Mark vii. 37. and calmly trust him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God to do so still, 1 Cor. i. 24. And tho' what he doth, as to the reason of his dispensations, they that are nearest to him may not know now, they may rest in the assurance that they shall know afterward, John xiii. 7. when they shall see with adoring wonder and the highest satisfaction and joy, how providence was all along fulfilling the promise, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28.

Altho' my house be not so with God, as a morning without clouds, my Redeemer liveth, through whom he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,

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nant, ordered in all things and sure ; and this is all my salvation and all my desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. By this covenant, whatever is laid upon me, or taken from me, Christ is mine still, and in him my final blessedness is secure, and answerable to the cost and preparation he has been at about it, and whatever I go thro' before I reach it, I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed, Rom. viii. 18.

5. *As depriv'd of the sense of God's favour.*

This is a trial that only a child of God is capable of, and to whom nothing can be more grievous, after having known what the lifting up of the light of his countenance means. In his *favour is life*, Ps. xxx. 5. and his *loving kindness is better than life*, Psal. lxxiii. 3. what then must it be, from being exalted to heaven, as made to rejoice in these, to be again *cast down*, and left to mourn in the dark? But in this case how sad soever, the christian is provided of comfort in a *living Redeemer*.

He liveth, who tho' most dear to the Father, has been tried in the same kind, and therein felt more than any of his followers can do, when on the cross he vented that doleful cry that was heard all over heaven, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken?* Mat. xxvii. 46. 'Tis not therefore inconsistent with a special relation to God, or interest in his love, to want the joys of it, as *this plain my Redeemer* did.

He liveth, thro' whom it is that the *candle of the Lord has shined upon my head*, Job xxix. and that I might have known the time when the Almighty
was

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was with me in a manner greatly endearing ; and tho' I am not now as in *months that are past*, I have the same Jesus to look to, by way of thankful acknowledgement for what I have enjoy'd, and imploring his intercession for what I have lost ; and I have reason to do it in hope, as *he was forsaken for a time, that I might not be forsaken for ever.*

He liveth, and as the angel of the covenant, *always beholdeth the face of my Father in heaven*, Mat. xviii. 10. and in a persuasion of this, I can't make light of the comfort carried in the thought, that the sun is where it was, as full of light in itself, and open to my head above, tho' a cloud for the present dwell upon my soul ; and tho' *neither sun nor stars appear for many days*, Acts xxvii. 20. I would not cease having my eye upward, to him who *createth the light*, and causeth it to *arise in darknes*s. I find it has been a tried course, and encouraged with success. Others have *looked unto God*, through a Redeemer, and *been lightned*, and *their faces have not been ashamed*, Ps. xxxiv. 5. *Weeping with them has endured for a night, but joy has come in the morning* ; why may it not be so with me ?

He liveth, who cried, *My God, my God*, as expressive of his firm adherence to him, even when, as to sense, he complain'd of being forsaken by him, and therein, by his example, as well as by his word, instructed me to abide by my choice of God as *mine*, and my resolution to be *his*, and upon this ground to think with application that the covenant is mutual ; and so tho' *walking in darknes*s, and *having no light*, to trust

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in the name of the Lord, and stay upon my God,
Is. l. 10.

He liveth, who when in the deepest distress was the nearest Paradise; and as the thickest darkness is wont to usher in the break of day, I would take the valley of Achor, for a door of hope: the greater my present trouble by divine withdraws, the sooner may it be over, and the shadow of death turned into the morning, by the rising of the sun of righteousness upon my soul, with healing in his wings.

He liveth, whose darkness was followed with an everlasting day; and the same happy change every one of his members, that is now forsaken and grieved in spirit, is encouraged to expect, remembring what is promised so full to their case; for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. Isa. liv. 7, 8.

He liveth, who alone can shew me the Father to satisfaction, and in seeing whom I see the Father. And tho' he also hath withdraw himself and is gone, I will own and call him my Beloved still, and as such, arise and follow after him, Cant. iii. enquire for him of all I meet, and continue the search through the greatest discouragements, Cant. v. having reason to believe, from the experience of others, and his own word, that it shall not be in vain, as he has said, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you, John xiv. 18. He knows what they feel in his absence, to whom he is precious, and knows what he has
said

said for their common consolation, in which I would put in for a share. *Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you,* John xvi.

He liveth, who will thus shew himself to his people here, or take them up to be with him in heaven, and make good that word, which in the darkest night I would make my song, *The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended,* Is. lx. 19, 20.

6. *As to the temptations of Satan, the wiles and assaults of the power of darkness.* These are what the followers of the Lamb are here liable to, and often put to wrestle with, but may be comforted in this, that *their Redeemer liveth.*

Think, O my soul, and let it strengthen thy hands, *my Redeemer liveth*, and is *exalted far above all principalities and powers*, Eph. i. 21. and yet in that exalted state hath a tender concern for the meanest of his followers: *For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,* Heb. iv. 15. and hence is able to succour them that are tempted, and merciful and faithful to do so.

He liveth, who hath pray'd for all his disciples as well as for *Peter*, that their faith fail not, Luke xxii. 32. Proclaim'd from heaven for the comfort of others as well as *Paul*, that his grace is sufficient for them, 2 Cor. xii. 9. and through whom the Father is become the God of peace, and will shortly bruise Satan under the feet of his

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saints, and set them out of his reach for ever, *Rom. xvi. 20.*

7. *Under the afflictive sense of sin, as to guilt and corruption, christians may look to their living Redeemer, and be fully relieved.*

He liveth, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. and there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit, Rom. viii. 1. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and such a one as in whom the Father proclaims himself well pleased, 1 John ii. 1. Now it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, Rom. viii. 33.

He liveth, to sanctify by his spirit, as well as pardon in his blood; in him as our head for influence, it pleaseth the Father that all fulness should dwell, Col. i. 19. and of his fulness all his shall receive grace for grace, till they are wrought up to a perfect conformity to his image, John i. 16. that they may be with him where he is to behold his glory, John xvii. 24.

He liveth, and remembers what is recorded of him for the comfort of the weakest in the household of faith: A bruised reed shall be not break, and smoking flax shall be not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory, Isa. xlii. 3.

He liveth, and hears with compassion the groans of his members by reason of a body of death; and as sin dethron'd shall have no more dominion
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over them, he will also take care, that e'er long it shall have no more a being in them.

He liveth, who is anointed to give to them, who upon account of its present remains mourn in Sion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified, Isa. lxi. 4.

He liveth, who will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2 Thes. i. 10. when the good work begun in them shall be brought forth perfect, and all shewn without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing as would obscure their beauty, or take off from their mutual Joy.

8. *As in solitude about finding the way to heaven by reason of error and delusion.* This a christian can't but have his thoughts upon, especially if his lot should be cast in such a time as Christ tells his disciples of, when *false Christs and false prophets shall arise*, and it may be deceive many, *Mat. xxiv. 24.* But in the multitude of his thoughts within him with reference to this, he has comforts sufficient in a living Redeemer to delight his soul.

He liveth, who is the great shepherd of the sheep, the captain of their salvation that are to be conducted to glory, to whom they are committed for that end, to look after them, and that he may be accountable for them, and see that none of them are missing or found imperfect in the day they shall be called for.

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He liveth, who is equal to the trust, and has graciously undertaken it; who *gave his life for the sheep*, and has thence a special right in them to engage his care; and in quality of a shepherd, *calleth his own sheep by name*, John x. and *leadeth them out*, and leadeth them on, *goeth before them*, and *the sheep follow him*; and as he alone hath the *words of eternal life*, he will infallibly instruct them so far to know *him* and *his voice*, as to distinguish it from the voice of a *stranger*, and flee from any that would deceive them to their ruin. He speaks it to their comfort, *I know my sheep*; and adds, *I am also known of mine*; and that mutual peculiar knowledge on either side, shall prevent their being lost. If any one happen to go astray, he will with particular diligence look after that one until he find it, and *lay it on his shoulders* as a pleasant load, and bring it rejoicing home, *Luke xv. 5.*

He liveth, to whom that prayer hath been made by the church, to be used by every believer, as unwilling to turn aside, *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest*, Cant. i. 7. to which he hath returned in answer; *If thou know not, O thou fairest, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock*, ver. 8. and he will not fail to shew them the way he directs them to, remembering what is written for the encouragement of such; *their ears shall hear a word behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*, Isa. xxx. 21.

The representation of the *coming* of the *man of sin*, must be own'd to be formidable, as it is
said

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said to be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, 2 Thes. ii. But the followers of the Lamb are of another character, and under a better teacher, this being the account he gives his Father of himself and them, *I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word*, John xvii. 6. And again, *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them*, ver. 8. And receiving and keeping the word of his patience, they may every one read with application his gracious promise, *I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*, Rev. iii. 10.

He liveth, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. To whom God giveth not the spirit by measure, John iii. 34. and the spirit pour'd upon the head, is for the benefit of his members, to lead them into all truth. They have an unction from the Holy One, whereby they know all things necessary to their abiding in Christ, and as it hath taught them, 'tis said to such without hesitation, *Ye shall abide in him*, and so can't but be safe, 1 John ii. He indeed lets them know that delusions may grow to a threatening height, even if it were possible, to deceive the very Elect, Mat. xxiv. 24. but by the supposition he makes, he plainly intimates that all things considered, *it is not possible*.

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He liveth, by whom they are ransom'd who are travelling to heaven, and in the way thither, tho' fools in the world's account, *they shall not finally err*, Isa. xxxv. 8--10. In lesser things they may be led aside, but in foundation truths they shall be immoveably fix'd, and by the word given them, escape the *path of the destroyer*. The *deceived* and *deceiver* are both the Lord's, Job. xii. 16. the one to preserve, the other to restrain ; so that his ransom'd ones shall come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

9. *Under persecution or suffering for the sake of Christ and devotedness to him.*

This his followers have been used to, and is what christians walking suitably to their character, are bid in common to expect, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. And if they are called to *resist unto blood, striving against sin*, they are not to think strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened unto them, 1 Pet. iv. 12. being plainly told that they must *through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. But in whatever kind or degree appointed to this, *knowing their Redeemer liveth*, may carry them through with comfort.

He liveth, and in all their afflictions of this kind, hath taken care to let them and their enemies know, he is most nearly concerned ; thus calling down from his throne to one that was breathing out slaughter against his disciples, Saul, Saul, *why persecutest thou me ?* Acts ix. 4.

There

There is an everlasting enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; hence every *Abel* has his *Cain*, and it may be many of them; they that are *after the flesh persecuting them that are after the spirit*, Gal. iv. 29. But he liveth, who has told his disciples that the quarrel is common to him and them; *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you*. John xv. and in that hatred persecuted him to death, but the comfort is, it could not keep him from rising and living again, and ascending to reign for ever on high; and as from his *suffering* they may learn, that the world's hatred is not new, and so that they are not to look for exemption from it, *as the servant is not greater than the Lord*; so from his *triumph* they may be assured, that to whatever length that hatred proceed, it shall be impotent to their ruin, and no bar to their blessedness. The ground of the world's hatred to the saints, carries this cordial with it, that it speaks them the objects of the Redeemer's love; their relation to him evidenc'd by his likeness, he lets them know is at the bottom of their enemies rage, *If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*: And how calmly may they trust their cause, and themselves in his hand, under hardships brought upon them, as call'd into his kingdom?

He liveth, and tells his suffering servants of the care he has taken, that in him *they might have peace*; and though he tells them likewise, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, he immediately

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adds, *but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,* John xvi. 33.

He liveth, who went himself from the cross to the throne, and has the greatest happiness to bestow as the purchase of his blood, and that there may be no fear of being a loser by him, he thus holds it up to my faith under whatever he calls me to suffer, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne,* Rev. iii. 21. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life,* Rev. ii. 10.

He liveth, and well remembers himself what he deliver'd for the encouragement of his servants, at the close of his sermon on the mount, *Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,* Mat. v. and the greater their present sufferings, the more glorious may be their crown to over-balance all. *The light affliction, which is but for a moment, working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. This our Lord repeats again, and leaves upon record, as an everlasting cordial, under the saddest instances of suffering from an evil world; *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.*

He liveth, who hath the government of the world on his shoulders now, and whom God hath ordain'd to be its final judge, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him

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from the dead, Acts xvii. 31. And though he is at present out of sight, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds, and of all their hard speeches against him, Jude xiv. When he will at once prove, that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished, 2 Pet. ii. 9. And that it is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to the troublers of his people, and to them that are troubled, everlasting rest, 2 Thes. i. 6, 7.

10. *The Redeemer's living is the believer's security against the dread and danger of apostacy.*

Tho' such a one looking to himself, may have his fears of perishing by what he may meet with before he get to heaven; or that there will come a day in which he shall not be able to stand, yet looking by faith to Jesus on whom his help is laid, and reading his interest in him, he has reason to sing, *The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted, Psal. xviii. 46.*

He liveth, who not only knows his sheep, with unchangeable affection, but being sensible how prone they are to droop, speaks full their satisfaction, *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand, John x. 28, 30.* And in regard of a joint concern for the preservation of such, as well as in other respects, he adds, *I and my Father are One.*

He

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He liveth, and in him all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen, 2 Cor. i. 10. particularly these, As thy days are, so shall thy strength be, Deut. xxxiii. 25. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13. Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, Is. xli. 10.

He liveth, who to all the kind things recorded in the bible, is the faithful and true witness, Rev. i. 5. the mediator and messenger of the covenant, who wears all the perfections that make up the name of God, to make good his word; Mal. iii. 1. and as all that the Father has drawn to him, have an interest in both, the apostle puts the challenge in common, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Rom. viii. 35, 39. He does not say, they may not be tried with what is most terrible to flesh and blood: Tribulation and distress, persecution and famine, nakedness, peril and sword; but the mention of these serves only to raise his triumph, while looking unto Jesus, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors thro' him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This he elsewhere brings home to himself, and knowing whom he had believed, in a sense of his
happi-

happiness, breaks forth into praise, as upon the same ground every sincere christian may do, *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen.* 2 Tim. iv. 18.

11. *As affected with the death of the righteous, private christians or ministers.*

This ought to be considered and laid to heart, Isa. lvii. 1. especially when such are taken away in the midst of their age and usefulness, at a time when the most wanted and desired, before they had finished what valuable design and * work they might have in hand. No friend to Christ and his interest in the world, but will and ought to be touch'd with this; but whoever dies, christians are not to mourn, as men without hope, 1 Thes. iv. 13. nor carry it as if the consolations were small, of which they have an everlasting spring, in that *their Redeemer liveth.*

He liveth, who raised up and furnished out every useful christian and minister that ever appeared, and made them to be that to the world, and church, and to us that they were; and tho' he has called some of them home, there is still the same *fulness* dwelling in him as ever, to prepare others to stand up in their room, it may be to advantage, as when *Elijah* is taken to heaven, a double portion of his spirit rests on *Elisha*, 2 Kings ii. and *Moses* dying, who brought the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, has *Joshua* his successor to lead them

* As the late reverend and excellent Mr. Matthew Henry, who died as he was entering upon the last volume, designed to compleat his exposition of the bible.

into

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into the promised land. The departure of Christ is to make way for the comforter to come down; upon which account he tells his sorrowing disciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away*, John xvi. 7. and how difficult soever they are to believe this, they find it true: and after *Christ's* ascension, when *Stephen* was stoned to death, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and so by devout men carried to his burial with great lamentation, to dry their tears and turn them into joy, *Acts* vi. 5. *Saul* who was consenting to the murder, and going on a fierce persecutor, by our Lord's appearing to him and immediate call from heaven, is made a preacher of the gospel, and who was ever better qualified for the work, or attended with greater success, *Acts* vii. 58. viii. 2. ix.

If it be said, that holy active souls are taken away before they had accomplished all that they had in design for Christ, how much more reviving should it be, to hear him proclaim as to his great undertaking for us, *It is finished*.

Great indeed is the loss to our world when a good man and minister dies out of it, in regard of the precious treasure that every one of that number takes with him; and when graves open thick and swallow up such, and still the cry is, *Give, give*, we have reason to pray with great earnestness, *Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men*, *Psal.* xii. 1. But in this case, 'tis enough that the Redeemer liveth, who when he ascended up on high, received and gave gifts unto men, namely, some apostles, and some prophets,
and

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and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; and this for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Ephes. iv. 8--13.

He liveth, who in sending forth his servants to disciple all nations, Mat. xxviii. encouraged them with the promise of his uninterrupted presence, not to sustain their persons, for they are long since dead, but to continue their doctrine in a succession of such as should come into their standing work; so that he will always have some, by virtue of his authority to minister to his church, that he will always be with, even to the end of the world; and tho' one soweth and another reapeth, we may rest assured, that hands shall not be wanting by which all the harvest, how great soever, shall sooner or later be gathered in.

He liveth, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, Rev. ii. 1. and when he is pleased to take any of these out of his sight, and fix them in the third heaven; he has other stars that he will bid to rise, and the seven spirits of God so to gift them, that they may be burning and shining lights, Rev. iii. 1. so that this world shall never be totally benighted, nor left without some to lead men to Christ, and afterwards to guide and go before them to glory?

Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? are questions that carry

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carry their own sad answer, *Zach. i. 5. they were not suffered to continue by reason of death : But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8.* His life and office are inseparable, and both without end. The *man* that is our Redeemer, is also the *Son of God* ; and *because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.* Though therefore it hath a doleful sound, that *all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass, tho' the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away,* faith may read on with triumph, nevertheless *the word of the Lord endureth for ever, the word of a living Redeemer to accomplish his pleasure ; and this is the word,* which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Lastly, *That the Redeemer liveth, may keep up the believer's joy when he comes to die.*

He liveth, and by dying I am to go and live with him for ever. 'Tis indeed a dark and gloomy valley through which I am to pass, but he hath gone before, and shewn me the way, and made it safe, and stands on the other side, with the keys not only of *death*, but of the * *unseen eternal state* ; having power to shut the bottomless pit, and screen me from hell, and

* Τὸ ἀδὲν in that text, *Rev. i. 18.* is not to be confined to the state and place of torment, but as standing for the object of the Redeemer's power after death, doubtless takes in the invisible world in both its parts, viz. *heaven and hell.* Ita ἀδὲν; & in sacris & in profanis literis usurpatur: respondet Heb. *מִצַּח*, cum significat receptaculum pro animabus tum beatorum tum damnatorum. Vid. *Martinii Lexic. in verb. Inferus.*

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open to me the kingdom of heaven, and bid me welcome to all the blessedness and glory there.

He liveth, who died and rose again, and so is become the first fruits of them that sleep, 1 Cor. xv. 20. and tho' I lay down my body in the grave, I lay it down in hope, that he will raise it up at the last day, in a likeness to his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

He liveth, and will stand at the latter day upon the earth; and tho' after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and not another, and therein be like him, and so satisfied for ever, Job xix. 25, 26, 27. To add, because I can need no more.

He liveth, and my life is hid with Christ in God, who is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day; and when Christ, who is my life shall appear, then shall I also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4.

The whole discourse having been of a *practical* nature, a few things shall contain the

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. *Let your faith be well grounded and firm in this great truth, that there is a Redeemer living.*

The God of peace hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, Heb. xiii. 20. and is in him reconciling the world to himself, not imputing trespasses to them who will flee for refuge to the atonement made, 2 Cor. v. 19. We can tell you, for your relief, particularly under affliction, that your case is hopeful, and may be happy for ever. The troubles that may be the lot of any upon
earth,

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earth, are not to be look'd upon as necessary fore-runners to eternal torment. There is a Redeemer living, able and willing to support the greatest sufferings of the present life, to put an end to them, do you good by them, and after all to deliver you from the wrath to come, and give you salvation with eternal glory, 1 Thes. i. 10. Believe and bless God for the reviving news, the gospel of his grace, in which the endearing discovery is made and sent to you.

2. *How much is every one concerned to look after an interest in a living Redeemer, and make it sure?*

Where is the person that is without his troubles in the world, under which he needs relief? However 'tis certain, we are all dying out of it, and what can be an equal cordial to any distressed and dying, to the being able to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth?*

3. In order to this, *Let every heart open to a living Redeemer, and bid him welcome.*

He came to seek and to save that which was lost, Mat. xviii. 11. and invites you to him to that end, and one would think his person and errand motives sufficient; as you love your souls, leave him not to complain, *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,* John v. 40.

His consent to be yours is already given, and he now only waits for your consent to be his; yield this, and the covenant is made and mutual; the relation begun that will occasion new joy in heaven, and be a just ground of consolation to you all the way thither.

4. *As faith, for this is the gift and work of God, Eph. ii. 8. John vi. 29. remember your humble earnest cries are to be sent to heaven, for the regenerating spirit, the great agent to persuade, and enable lost sinners to receive an offer'd Saviour, and resign to him.*

The whole trinity have a hand in sinners recovery : as many as are *taught* and made to bear and learn of the Father, and so drawn by him, come to Christ, John vi. 45. The spirit herein is the immediate teacher, and for the encouragement of such as he is bringing in, 'tis the Redeemer's promise, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,* John vi. 37.

5. *Having a living Redeemer, prove it to his honour and your own comfort, by following his example, and treading in his steps.*

Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, Phil. ii. 5. and carry it that he may say of you, tho' in the world, *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,* John xvii. 16. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked,* 1 John ii. 6. Such an imitation of Christ, is the way to assurance of a special relation to him, and so to that joy of which it is the spring, the way in which alone it is to be expected and maintain'd. The christian that boasts of the joys of assurance, without exemplary holiness, proclaims his joy groundless, or is undermining it apace, and instead of singing, *I shall never be moved ; Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong,* Psal. xxx. 7. you may soon hear him in another note, crying, *Thou didst bide thy face*

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and I was troubled. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit, Psal. li. 12.

Improve the consideration of the *Redeemer's living*, and your *relation* to him, to raise your hopes, silence your fears, quicken to duty, restrain from sin, make you *faithful* to him *even to the death*, Rev. ii. 10. *looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, Jude xxi.

Often think how unsuitable it would be, having a *living Redeemer* gone before to heaven, to walk unevenly, slowly, or drooping after him, when you are every day *nearer your salvation than when you first believed*, Rom. xiii. 11. and have him declaring, *If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be*, John xii. 26.

Lastly, *Long to be with your living Redeemer*, and believe it so far better, as to make it worth the while to die, Phil. i. 23.

If the *manifestations*, he sometimes make of himself to his servants here, be so reviving as to sweeten the sharpest affliction, John xiv. 21. what will it be *to be with him where he is, to behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. and be bid *to enter into his joy*? Mat. xxv. 21.

How soon will all that is terrible in *dying* be over, and be forgot by the soul, the first moment of its entrance upon that *life with Christ*, that is immediately to follow? And tho' the *bodies of believers* must *return to the dust* as well as others, he to whom they belong has appointed a *set time* in which he will remember them, according

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cording to his promise, *Job. xiv. I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death, Hof. xiii. 14. From his desire to the work of his own hands, he will assuredly call, so as that they shall answer, who sleep in the dust, and awake with singing, to take their share of happiness, in conjunction with their holy expecting souls, Isa. xxvi. 19. in seeing the King in his beauty, in the land that is afar off, Isa. xxxiii. 17.*

For wise ends 'tis appointed that *death* and the *grave* shall stand between; but what is there in either comparable to the blessedness that lies beyond? Our expected *Lord* is pleased before hand to tell his servants of his *coming to take them to this*, that under all they feel and are farther to go through, they may *lift up their heads for joy, that their redemption draws nigh, Luke xxi. 18.* And as he proclaims, *Behold I come quickly, 2 Tim. iv. 8.* let all that love his appearing, evidence that love in saying, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus, Rev. xxii. 7, 20.*

T H E M E T H O D.

TO engage regard, the text considered as introduced by Job with a solemn wish, that what he was going to utter might stand upon record for ever. pag. 186

He therein begins a confession of his faith, and opens the ground of his support and comfort in his distressed state.

Several observations hinted as contained in the words, viz.

1. *That afflictions do not dissolve the endear'd relation between the Redeemer and redeemed, Christ and believers.* 188

Job suppos'd to live between Abraham and Moses, from whence, with what he here speaks of our Lord, observ'd,

2. *That Jesus Christ, as he is the only Redeemer of fallen man, has been all along so, even before his incarnation.* 190

3. *A believer may attain a comfortable evidence of a special relation to Christ, and interest in him.* 191

These only touch'd in the way to that which is the ground of the discourse, viz.

4. *That a believer, knowing his Redeemer liveth, hath therein a spring of abundant consolation, whatever affliction he here labours under, or is liable to.* 192

Under this shewn,

- I. *How the title of Redeemer belongs to Christ.* 192

The word Redeemer signifies also a kinsman.

This apply'd to Christ upon a threefold account, viz.

1. *In regard of the state of bondage he finds us in.* 193

2. *His near relation to us.* 194

3. *In that relation his performing the part of a kinsman for us, i. e. redeeming us from our bondage and misery, and this two ways, viz.*

(1.) By price.

(2.) By power. 195

- II. *Believers will and ought to betake themselves to Christ, the living Redeemer, for relief and comfort under all their troubles.* 196

The reasons of this assigned, viz.

1. *As fallen creatures, there is no coming unto the Father, but thro' a Mediator, or in the name of a Redeemer.*

I

2. *Christ*

The M E T H O D.

2. *Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, such a Redeemer as there is no other.* 196
3. *He is provided and exalted of God to this very end, that the weary and heavy laden, under whatever burden, might apply to him for ease and rest, and hereby honour the Son as they honour the Father.*
4. *To them that believe he is precious, from the experience they have had of his power and grace, which determines them to him, and confirms their trust in him, as what shall not leave them ashamed.*
- III. *'Tis of powerful use to the consolation of believers, in looking to the provided Redeemer, to know that he liveth, and that he is theirs.* 197
 - I. *That he liveth.*

This may be said of him,

 - (1.) *As God.*
 - (2.) *As Emmanuel, God-man.* 198

The comfort contain'd in his living as God-man, who was once dead, with the grounds of it, viz.

 - [1.] *As it speaks the value and efficacy of his death and sacrifice: That what he has done and suffer'd is well-pleasing to God, and available for the recovery of fallen man.*
 - [2.] *As it confirms the truth of his doctrine and promises, as to what he was, and would bestow on his believing followers in this life, and in another.*
 - [3.] *As he lives in heaven, in what quality intimated, and to what purposes; for which they may firmly rest upon him from the consideration.*
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S E R M O N

O C C A S I O N ' D

By the DEATH of the late Reverend
Mr. *George Sendall*, Minister of the
Gospel in *London*.

The D E D I C A T I O N.

To *Madam Sendall*, Relick of the Reverend Mr.
Sendall, and the Church lately under his
Pastoral Care.

Dear Friends,

I MAKE the less difficulty of yielding to your desire, in
sending you the following *sermon*, as the sight of it may
the oftner recall *him* to your thoughts, and therewith his
doctrine and *life*, whose *death* was the mournful occasion of
it: and if this prove a motive to engage you to follow his
faith, that which he preach'd and practis'd, *Heb. xiii. 7.*
in which he liv'd to so good purpose, and died with so much
comfort, *considering the end of his conversation*, I shall have
no reason to repent my labour, and you will be led to thank
God for my being your remembrancer.

You have now a fresh instance, that the way to glory lies
thro' the *valley of the shadow of death*; and of what use
bright evidences and realizing views of that glory are, not
only to free the dying believer from fear, but to fill him
with peace, the earnest of that into which his soul is about
to enter: and from the nearness in which he stood to you,

The DEDICATION.

who is gone before, *you* are particularly to hear it as the language of his *remove*, and the encouraging *manner* in which he went off; *prepare to follow*: do this, by expecting death as *certain*; and looking after that which will make it *sweet*, viz. a well-grounded hope of heaven beyond it.

What is necessary to such a hope, you may find in the text, namely, a quitting, in point of choice, the creature for God, self for Christ, sin for holiness, this world for that above; and then acting suitably to the choice made. This you have seen exemplified in him who left you the subject as his legacy; which therefore you are to read for *direction*, as marking out the way to blessedness, in the temper and tendency of an heir of it; and to your *consolation*, as considering him at rest in the fruition of that which you knew him so earnestly tending to.

The day of death, is said to be *better than the day of one's birth*, Eccl. vii. 1. This is not to be understood of every one, but according to the spirit's exposition, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*, Rev. xiv. 13. They are blessed indeed, as in being absent from the body, 2 Cor. v. 8. they are *present with the Lord, which is far better*, Phil. i. 23. But the height and compass of the happiness carried in this, cannot be known to us, by any thing short of possession. We must die, after them, into the same state, to be fully informed.

Well, in the mean time, nourish in your minds the most rais'd apprehensions of it: with new vigour put on towards it: employ faith and hope upon the *revelation* and *promises* of the word, to get the best acquaintance you can with it: pray the *Father of glory* to open your understandings and heaven, and shew you so much of the *inheritance of the saints in light*, as he sees suited to an expecting state. Be thankful for any thing of this by the way, and patiently wait his call, with a willingness to die, to go and see and enjoy the rest.

The breach made upon you, by which you are brought into a widow'd state, very sensibly tells you, that if nothing else may, death at farthest, on one side or the other, will dissolve the most desirable earthly relations, and teaches you the necessity and value of a special relation to the living God, which death cannot hurt, and which will hold through and beyond the grave. This once made, is for soul and body, time and eternity, and so fitted to give relief under the

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the death of any dearest to us, and the expectation of our own. Upon this ground, with what calmness and comfort may you speak to yourselves and one another, in a dying world, 'Tis enough, God is still alive; the Redeemer will never die, *Psal. xlviii. 14. and this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death: and afterwards receive us to glory, Psal. lxxiii. 24.*

I shall add no more, but my hearty prayer, For you, Madam,

That altho' your house be not so with God, as a morning without clouds, but sadly darkned and over-cast, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4, 5. you may nevertheless look unto God, and be lightned, Pf. xxxiv. 5. being able to say, Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire. May you find, That in the favour of God there is life indeed, abundantly making up the loss you have sustained, Pf. xxx. v. and that his loving kindness is better than life, Pf. xliiii. 3. even than that which you thought you cou'd least spare. May you dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, Psal. xci. 1. and thereby have your soul and sorrows refresh'd, your tears dried up, the remaining part of life smoothed, and made to glide pleasantly on to a peaceful death, and so into a blessed eternity.

For you the flock,

May the great and good shepherd and bishop of souls manifest his regard to you, 1 Pet. ii. 25. in setting a man over the congregation, *Numb. xxvii. 16. a pastor after his own heart, who may feed you with knowledge and understanding, Jer. iii. 15. and come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, Rom. xv. 29. that the sheep may not scatter, but go in and out, and find pasture, John x. 9. May what he taught you from the word, who is now remov'd, be remember'd by you, and his earnest requests to God be remember'd for you, and all fare the better for whom they were made. May any of you, that at his going hence were strangers to God, be brought home; and those whom he was instrumental of recovering, and left on the way to heaven, with pleased hopes of seeing them there, be forwarded and built up; and tho' one soweth, and another reapeth, may the pleasure of the Lord among you go on to prosper in different hands, that both they that sow, and they that*

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that *reap*, may *rejoice together* in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his *coming*, John iv. 36, 37. and God in *him* have the *glory* of all, 1 Theff. ii. 19.

For both,

May the afflictive providence be sanctified to saving purposes ; to bring you nearer to God, encrease your hatred of sin, teach and excite you to live more as those that are dying, minding above all things the concerns of your souls, and laying up your treasure in heaven, that upon the shortest warning, you may cheerfully depart, to enter into the joy of your Lord.

I am,

Praying and hoping for this,

Your Friend and Servant

in the Gospel of Christ,

D. WILCOX.

PSALM xvii. 15.

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

THIS Psalm is intituled, *A prayer of David*. His last request in it is this, in which every saint will heartily join, *O Lord, deliver me from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure*, ver. 13, 14. “ O let me be
“ none of the number who have this to be *their*
“ *all* ; and who, without looking farther, can
“ take up with it ! I must have a happiness of
“ another kind, and longer date, than all this
“ world

“ world can yield or offer ; a happiness in God,
“ or I can never have any. I take the begin-
“ nings of this here, as pledges of far greater to
“ be reach'd and enjoy'd beyond the grave.
“ What I have experienc'd of this, hath been
“ my best support upon *earth*, from whence my
“ desires and hopes run over with pleasure and
“ earnestness to the perfection of all in *heaven*.”
*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness :
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy like-
ness.*

We may here observe,

I. *The genuine temper of a gracious soul, as distinguished from all the rest of the world, viz. To be taken up with God, as his chief good.*

II. *What it is, with reference to God, that sums up the happiness of his people, viz. Beholding his face, his likeness, and the satisfaction that both will make way for, and run into.*

III. *If any are admitted to behold God's face to their satisfaction and happiness, it must be in righteousness.*

IV. *To whatever degree God may bring down heaven in the discoveries of himself to his people here, there is much more reserv'd above, which they are breathing after, and shall at last obtain.*

V. *There is a fix'd and proper season for their full satisfaction, viz. when they awake ; which they will and ought to have their eye to, and in a becoming manner to think and speak of.*

And when I have gone through *these*, 'twill be time to close with the application.

I. 'Tis

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I. 'Tis the genuine temper of a gracious soul, as distinguished from all the rest of the world, to be taken up with God, as his chief good.

We are all born with a cry after happiness; but since the apostacy, expect it in objects in which 'tis never to be found, and pursue it in a way which carries us the farther from it, while God and heaven are left behind.

This, how strange soever, is the character and course of all in their natural state: *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God; but they are all gone aside*, Psal. xiv. 2, 3. and under the sway of corruption, still going farther, none saying, *Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?* Job xxxv. 10.

Upon this account, men unchang'd, are fitly call'd *men of the world*, as wholly for it, swallow'd up and engross'd by it. They pursue it as their business; value it as their blessedness; and so live * *with God*, even while they live upon him, *Acts* xvii. 28.

But in this, a child of God is of another spirit, a more excellent one, *Numb.* xiv. 24. What the world was once to him, that God is now, to wit, his portion, *Prov.* xii. 26. And this is the language with which he runs to him, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25.

Having a new end, he is under a new bias; and as rescu'd from the common herd, has his desires carried a different way: *There be many that*

* i. e. In point of acknowledgement, ἁποσι εἰς τὴν χάριν, practical atheists in the world, *Eph.* ii. 12.

say,

say, *Who will shew us any good?* Psal. iv. 6. But saints are of a more refined taste, and any kind of good can no longer suit or satisfy their souls. They all look upward, and breathe their inmost sense in the following request; *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*, and the granting of this, gives them a joy that a *stranger intermeddleth not with*, Prov. xiv. 10. and such as no delights possible to others, even at harvest, or their highest tide, can ever equal. This the *Psalmist* speaks from what he felt, as a witness for God, *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

There is, and must be, a vast difference between the *people of God*, and the rest of mankind, as travelling to eternity. They that are to be removed from each other, as far as heaven is from hell hereafter, may well be supposed to be widely distinguished here. And the *distinction* is not merely *external*, but such as is deeply *inward*, and lies in the differing *dispositions* and *predominant workings* of mens *spirits*, either to *God* or the *world*, as their felicitating portion.

All in the state wherein they were born, cleave to earth, and rest in it, practically saying, *'Tis good to be here*; and so the spirit they are of is stil'd the *spirit of the world*.

On the contrary, *Him that is godly, the Lord hath set apart for himself*, Psal. iv. 3. And they that are of this character, from the greatest to the least, as coming into the number, renounce the *world* as a *rival* with their *Maker*, and center in God as infinitely *better*; and hereupon, as in earnest,

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earnest, pursuing their choice, they are said, in opposition to the former, to have *received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. On him their hearts and hopes are plac'd : after him their chief and most eager desires run. His *loving-kindness* to them is *better than life* : an interest in his goodness, is what they fear the forfeiture of, and awe themselves with more than death. Communion with him, is their heaven begun, *Hos.* iii. 5. and the perfect endless fruition of him, is all the heaven they expect. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob*, *Psal.* xxiv. 6.

Whilst others are carried to things below, *David*, as a man after God's 'own heart, says of himself, *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord*, *Psal.* xxv. 5. And this, in its measure, agrees to every one in whom grace reigns. Tho' they can't be always actually eying God, they would be as much with him as possible, as more to them than all the world : and this upon several accounts ;

(1.) *From a settled conviction of emptiness and insufficiency of any created good, to do for them what they need, or to be to them instead of God.*

When man fell from God, he turned to the creature, and places and thinks his happiness in it : But upon trial, all it amounts to is *vanity* and *vexation* ; and with this confession the true penitent, tired with his wild and vain pursuit, returns to God as his only rest.

Whatever were his apprehensions before, he is now sensible, with application to himself, that

the body is not the only or chief thing that we are to be concerned for ; nor the *present life*, and the gratifying and pleasing the appetite and senses, during a short uncertain space, what we are to take our estimate of happiness from. There is belonging to every one an undying part, of far higher account: a soul of a *spiritual* nature, which the things of earth do not suit ; of *vast desires*, which they cannot fill ; of *peculiar wants*, which they can no way answer: the whole world cannot procure a pardon for the guilty, or heal the diseased, or give peace to the awaken'd troubled soul: it cannot hold it in life, or go with it at death, or plead for it at judgment ; or open heaven, or deliver from hell, or in the least mitigate the torments there. Thus view'd, miserable indeed is the case of *those* who have their *portion in this life* ; which therefore the believer humbly * deprecates, and for himself looks above and beyond it all to God.

(2.) *There is every thing in God that may commend and endear him to his people, and attract their eyes and hearts to him.*

He is an *universal good*, in whom all possible excellencies and perfections meet, as streams in the ocean, and so God *all-sufficient* : he is a *good unmix'd*, in whom, as there is nothing wanting that is desirable, so nothing present that is evil. *God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all* : 1 John i. 5. He is a *good infinite and immense* ; and so most proper and adequate to answer all

* 'Twas a saying of Luther, Valde protestatus sum me nolle sic fatiari : *I deeply protested that I would not be so put off.* Melch Ad. in Vita Luth.

our necessities, employ all our powers, fill up all our capacities and desires to the utmost, and give that perfect rest that will exclude all possible want, and leave no room for an unsatisfy'd wish. And how many soever may be thus happy in God, his boundless fulness will be as sufficient to every one, as if there were none else; as millions of eyes may at once drink in the light of the sun, without the least diminution to any particular beholder. Moreover, *He is a good always the same*, above all possible decay; and so the happiness of his people can never abate by length of enjoyment, nor the least weariness arise as an occasion to admit the thought of change: *He is a good everlasting*, such as will never cease to be, and who can and will be the happiness of his people to all eternity. And, that nothing may be wanting, under the *mentioned characters*, to speak him amiable indeed, this is to be added as at the bottom, and the crown of all, he is *their God in Christ*, and so accessible by them; their *God in covenant*, and so ready to bid them welcome, and, in a peculiar manner, open and let out himself unto them.

(3.) *'Tis the property of grace coming from God, to carry his people to him, as their chief good.*

They are men, whose hearts God hath touch'd and turn'd, that thus follow him; and being drawn by him, whither should they run but to him? As savingly *enlighten'd* to discern his transcending excellency, they *love* him above all; and thence desire nothing so much, as to be taken up with the object *beloved*: *Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through Jesus Christ,*

Christ, in whom, as the great *Beloved*, they are *accepted*, Rom. v. 1. and so the ground of slavish fear is removed: and as *sanctify'd* by the spirit, and made like to God, their natural aversion is cured; and from a new principle, they are prepar'd for converse with him, and breathing after it, as what they cannot live without. If at any time diverted, their case is as that of the needle turn'd from its pole, trembling and unsettled, till it find its desired point.

'Tis remarkable, how all that are *partakers* of the *divine nature*, are, as to this, of the same temper, and carried the same way: how different soever as to age or sex, condition or place, they are herein united: God; the fountain of blessedness, they have chosen as their portion, and are all tending to him, as the *centre* of their rest.

The *new convert* comes into the kingdom of grace, saying, 'Tis good for me to draw near to God: and in the same mind the *old disciple* goes off to glory, saying, To be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, is far better. And how often is this his language by the way? As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

Under the most distant external circumstances, there belongs to them the same inward sense. They among them, that have most of the world, would think and own themselves miserable without God, and therefore in prosperity value his presence above all things else they enjoy:

to them that have least of the world, the same presence of God is more than all things else that they want ; and therefore they acquiesce with pleasure and satisfaction in himself. Upon supposition of the saddest case as to externals, they would not change their note, but say with the prophet, when nature is withering round them, as under an universal blast, *Altho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; tho' the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; tho' the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation,* Hab. iii. 17, 18. The fountain is full and inexhaustible, tho' all the streams of creature comforts be cut off, or dried up: here therefore will I sit, and drink, and then lift up my head and sing, *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage,* Pl. xvi. 6. Let others take up with what they will, *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.*

Thus in the midst of all earthly accommodations, God himself is his peoples happiness; and in the absence of these, he is still the same, and therefore in him they see reason still to be at rest. They can set God and an interest in him, against the greatest wants and troubles they may be subject to, and find in him enough to their relief, notwithstanding all. Let who will be disquieted, when denied what he would have of the present world, or deprived of external comforts in it. One born from heaven, can speak it to his Father there, “ *Lord, give me thy self, and I have e-*

“ *nough:*

“ nough : continue *mine*, and let me know it,
“ and I will be so far from complaining, that
“ my *heart shall be glad, and my glory rejoice*,
“ Psal. xvi. 9. Had I ten thousand worlds,
“ without God, I had nothing ; but in him I
“ have all. That God who is his own happi-
“ ness, without any thing else, is sufficient for
“ mine.” This leads us to add,

(4.) *Gracious souls have all found that rest, and some of them that joy in God, that nothing in the world besides can give, and which they would not exchange for any thing it can offer.*

It must be own'd, in point of *comfort*, there is a great deal of difference among such as stand equally related to God ; and no wonder, when their age and growth, dispositions and circumstances, watchfulness, work, and trials are so different, and the purposes so many and great that God has to serve by all. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*, Psal. xcvii. 11. but all have not an equal share of this, nor, it may be, any at all times : however, they that know least of what the *peace* of God means, the peace that is founded in *grace*, and bears it company, know it to be such, as is no where else to be had, and by this their *hearts and minds are kept thro' Christ Jesus*, Phil. iv. 7. in a resolved adherence to God as their best good. The weakest that have *yielded themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead*, from a persuasion and hope, and some inward *taste that the Lord is gracious*, 1 Pet. ii. 3. have their judgment and choice fix'd for him against all things else ; and the more they experience of this, upon

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longer standing, and as advancing in strength and stature, in the *sealing, earnest and first-fruits* of the spirit, *the harder* their souls follow after God, Psal. lxxiii. 8. and the more are they set against the contrary; being sure, upon the firmest ground, that looking any-where else, they can never have a better master, or the prospect of a greater reward, or a better way, or work, or end; or ever *change* but to their infinite loss: upon any motion of that kind, *Peter's* answer would be theirs, *Lord, to whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68.

Having been in the mount, and seen God's *power and glory*, as his people have sometimes done; had his *goodness* made to *pass before them*, and his *loving-kindness* freely let out upon them to the *satisfying* their souls as with *marrow and fatness*; they can never forget the gracious vouchsafement, nor receive it without a peculiar impression, that shall never be wholly extinguish'd or lost. The happy effect of this, in such, is an appetite more eager to things above, and deadened to all that belongs to earth. When tempted to look downward, to any thing here, under the notion of happiness; experience will enable them readily to reply, with *abhorrence* of the *pleasures of sin*, with *disdain* of the *delights of sense*, in comparison of those of a higher kind, *We are far better entertain'd with God*: No love, like the love of God; no comforts, like the comforts of God; no delight like that which is to be had in communion with him; no blessedness to that which will consist in the full enjoyment of him. *Blessed is the man whom*

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thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee,
Psal. lxxv. 4.

Such an one will record, and often recall the happy hours thus employ'd and fill'd between God and his soul, as the sweetest, the most desirable part of his time : And this, with *pleasure* and *thankfulness*, that any thing of this has been known, especially if still continu'd ; with *grief*, as often as he finds it otherwise, wishing, with *Job*, *Oh, that I were as in months past*, Job xxix. 2. He is ready to own, *It has been always best with him when nearest God, and worse when farthest off*. Oh ! the privilege of access to God by Jesus Christ, leaving all the world behind, and having my soul taken up with him, under the influences of his spirit, and the manifestations of his love ! How deservedly memorable is the time and place, and any instance of this ! When he hath drawn forth my desires, and then met them with suitable communications from the riches of his grace ; with a reviving voice calling me *Child*, and allowing, and enabling me to cry, *Abba, Father*, and with endearing tenderness treating me as such : If ever I had peace and comfort, delight and joy, it was then : if ever I was raised above the world, and willing to leave it, disengag'd from the inordinate love of life, and delivered from the fear of dying, it was then : if ever I could read my title to heaven clear, and had the glory and blessedness there shewn to my faith, and real and assuring foretastes of all, it was in being thus *near to God ; dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty*.

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And tho' after this, a *child of light* may walk in *darkness*, and from being lifted up, cast down again; sense of the mournful change, directs him to *God most high* as his only relief; none being able to do for him, what he has found God has graciously done, and therein given him encouragement to hope, that in his own time he will again vouchsafe. If God *give peace*, who or what *can cause trouble*? But *when he hideth his face*, whither should the benighted soul turn for light, but to the sun? *Job xxxiv. 29.* Before conversion, the awaken'd sinner could find no *rest* 'till he came to God; and any distance that may grow up afterwards, procures to the saint the most sensible pain, that is only to be removed by the same hand. In this case, to apply any where else, instead of succeeding to a cure, does but add to his sorrow. Should the cry for help be carried round from creature to creature, the *wounded spirit* would have cause for *Job's* complaint, *miserable comforters are ye all!* Upon this ground, the resolve will be taken up with a becoming vehemence, *I will go and return unto my first husband; for then it was better with me than now!* *Hos. ii. 7.* Oh! the difference between what I have had and enjoy'd in God, and in any thing else abstracted from him? In him my *soul* was lodged in goodness, and so had reason to *dwell at ease*, *Psal. xxv. 13.* and what wounds and bruises I have received, has been by turning aside. This has rob'd me of my best joys, broken my peace, dash'd my hopes, reviv'd my fears, under which it has been hard to bear up: so true have I found it

it, That *they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy*, Psal. lxxiii. 27. The farther from God, the farther from happiness, satisfaction, and all good; and the nearer *perishing* or the greatest misery: wherefore let who will be a chosen stranger to him, or make light of his being withdrawn, duty and interest call me to *delight myself in the Lord*, as that which can alone bring me *the desires of my heart*, Psal. xxxvii. 4. From the experience I have had of the advantage of this, and the sadness of an interruption, I desire, and pray, and hope, and wait, to have pass'd views and joys reviv'd, and rais'd to a higher degree, in being nearer and nearer still. Nor in my *ascent to God*, would I set bounds to myself, where he sets none, but aspire on to the brightest vision, as where that is vouchsafed, perfect rest is only to be found. But this brings us to consider,

II. *What it is, with reference to God, that sums up his peoples happiness, viz. Beholding his face, his likeness, and the satisfaction that will result from both.*

I. *Beholding his face.* This includes three things.

(1.) That God, as the object of his peoples happiness, *has different ways of manifesting himself to them, in a manner more or less glorious, as he sees good.*

His opening himself to view, is not a matter of necessity, but of grace; and so the degree of the manifestation, is such as he chuses, as well as the *person* admitted to it. There are brighter or fainter appearances, according to the pitch to

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which he would raise the beholder's blessedness. Thus the *face of God*, and the *glory of God*, are one and the same, *viz.* The discovery of his perfections in the highest, most amiable lustre, to the highest felicity and joy of those to whom it is made. Such a discovery belongs to the upper world, and will make heaven there; and so is not to be expected, nor indeed supportable, by any in this mortal state. When *Moses* prays, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory!* God's answer to him, is this; *Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live*, *Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20.* There must be a difference between earth and heaven; between the discoveries of myself to those that live in a frail, expecting state, and those who are gone thro' death into a more perfect one. His request, as duly regulated, is graciously indulg'd, as God promises, *Thou shalt see my back-parts*, *ver. 23.* but repeats it again, *My face shall not be seen.* Something of God may be seen and known in the present life; but *heaven* only is the place for *beholding his face*, which, the best must die, before they can be admitted to.

(2.) *God will have his people near him. in order to their happiness in him*, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* So near as that they shall see him *face to face.*

This world is a distant place; and believers themselves, whilst *at home in the body*, are said to be *absent from the Lord*: but upon their departure hence, they shall be *present with the Lord*, *2 Cor. v. 6, 8.* and this in another manner than ever before. Christ speaks of heaven as his *Father's*

ther's house, John xiv. 1. where all the children of God are to live under his eye.

(3.) *In this nearness their eye shall be clear and strengthened for the glorious sight.*

Here they cannot see *God's face* and live; above, the most joyful life will consist in it, and be maintain'd by it. On the part of the *object*, the blessed God, nothing shall be wanting, or concealed, that will tend to the felicity of those that shall be taken to dwell with him: on the part of the *subject*, the soul first, and afterwards soul and body purified, shall be perfectly suited to the *intellectual* and *sensible* glory, respectively prepared for their blissful entertainment. The *manifestation* shall be most full, constant, particular: the *vision* shall be most comprehensive, steady, appropriating: both most vigorous, unwearied and everlasting. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, Mat. v. 8. This is the first branch of the saints happiness in God, *beholding his face*. To which is added,

2. *His likeness.*

This may be consider'd in relation

Either to the $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{object,} \\ \text{or} \\ \text{subject.} \end{array} \right.$

(1.) In relation to the *object*, and so the *likeness of God* may stand,

[1.] *In general*, for the same with his *face* or *glory* open'd in heaven, in beholding of which, saints may well count upon their perfect blessedness, as it is the *likeness of God*. What was promised to *Moses*, is thus describ'd, *The similitude of the Lord shall be behold*, Numb. xii. 8. Much

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more will that *term* belong to the glory which shall be opened and shine forth above. 'Twill be a manifestation eminently *divine*; most worthy of God; made by him, and designed to prove his deity to the fullest conviction, in fixing the eyes and minds of his people upon him with the greatest intenseness and eternal delight.

[2.] *More especially, the likeness of God, may point to Jesus Christ, who is one with him, and in whom most of God is manifested and to be seen. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. And accordingly, he is said to be in the form of God, Phil. ii. 6. the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. No man hath seen God at any time, John i. 18. for he dwelleth in inaccessible light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. but the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him: and this, not only by his doctrine, but in his person, being God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Whilst he was here conversing with men, upon Philip's coming to him with that petition, Lord shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us; Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father, John xiv. 9. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shines to us in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. It does so here; and under this notion we are, in the New Testament stile, directed to conceive of heaven, namely, As being with Christ, and beholding his glory. John xvii. 24. And at that day it shall be known, that he is in the Father, and the Father in him, and that, he that*
I thus

thus sees him, sees the Father indeed, John xxiv. 20. in a manner that will lead the happy beholder to say, with the highest transport, This sufficeth.

(2.) *The likeness of God*, may be consider'd in relation to the *subject*: and so is his likeness impress'd upon the soul; a resemblance of the glory open'd and beheld in his face. This is here begun: *We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18.* But the *perfection* of it is reserv'd to the yet clearer vision, which all the children of God shall have of him, in the day they are waiting for. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2.* There is a *glory to be revealed in us*, as well as to us, *Rom. viii. 18.* Besides which, as belonging to a saint's happiness, there is,

3. *Satisfaction.* This *both* the former make way for, and run into. Open vision begets perfect likeness; and between God and souls perfectly like him, what distance can remain? what joy be wanting? which way can they turn their thoughts, and not find cause of the highest delight? To consider *where* they are, *viz.* in the most bright and glorious place, the *city of the living God*, the celestial *paradise*, the *third heaven*; that which was framed by the *Most High* for the residence of his throne, the temple of his presence, and so fill'd with the *glory of God* and of the *Lamb*, supplying the place of the sun, and making an eternal day, in which they shall
always

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always live, and always rejoice. To consider themselves freed from all evils that were ever felt, or possible : none of which can have any place in the presence of God and the Redeemer, whose salvation is compleat, and now they are made to know it is so, in that *God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes*, and brought them where *there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are wholly over*, Rev. xxi. 4. With what transport will they be led to say, how much better is it where we are, than where we were ! considering themselves rais'd to the highest honour in likeness to God, and so made meet to dwell with him, and suited to the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly state : having their minds filled with the clearest light, and their hearts inflam'd with the most ardent love ; being throughout pure, and without all spot, and so joining with the glorious assembly of the first-born, in contemplating, admiring, praising, and adoring the fountain of their being and blessedness for ever. What more can they desire or wish, than to be under the brightest displays of the divine perfections, and the freest communications of God's love and goodness, never to be interrupted or abated, and never to end.

Oh ! happy they, who, from seeing God's back-parts, are thus gone to see him face to face ; who, from being cover'd with his hand in the cliff of the rock, are now taken within the vail, into that *presence of his, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11. Where they shall live under the
light

light of his countenance, never to be eclipsed, in whose favour is life. Where they shall never sin, and God will never frown, never turn away his face, or look on with a displeased eye. Where they shall know him better than they can here conceive, and love him more than they can now think, and feeling themselves happy, have their souls at rest in him, looking no farther, desiring no more, to their compleat and endless satisfaction.

Having a *promise* of *entring* into such a *rest*, what *fear* and watchfulness is necessary, lest any of us should seem to come short! *Heb. iv. 1.* But this leads us to the head to be next considered, *viz.*

III. *Whoever is admitted to behold God's face to his satisfaction and happiness, it must be in righteousness.* The *Psalmist* looked for it no other way. This doubtless

takes in both a *righteousness* { *imputed,*
and
inherent.

I. *A righteousness imputed*; namely, the *righteousness* of *Christ* put on by faith. Without this, there is no standing before God, or approach to him. Having by wilful transgression fallen from God, he, in effect, says to us, with reference to *Christ*, as *Joseph* to his brethreu, concerning *Benjamin*, *Unless you bring him with you, ye shall not see my face*, *Gen. xliii. 3.* And our Lord is express, declaring, for our instruction in his necessity and office, *I am the way, the truth, and the life*, *John xiv. 6.*

By

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By sin we forfeited heaven, and all the blessedness that makes it up : Christ, and he only, hath purchased it for us ; and if ever we have a title to it, or admission there, it must be upon the account of the atoning meritorious sacrifice which he hath offer'd, and the *everlasting righteousness* which he hath brought in. Such a way for our recovery is the contrivance of that wisdom which *angels* adore, in which we have reason, with the highest wonder and thankfulness, to join with them : That *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one, many should be made righteous*, Rom. v. 19. That God should appoint his own son to be our Saviour, in bringing us back to him ; and in order to it, make him *to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

This is that righteousness which the apostle expresses so great a value for, and is so earnest to secure : *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 8, 9. This is that which the believer trusts to, and triumphs in. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, even to him shall Men come : in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, Isa. xlv. 24. By this we are skreen'd from all that we had to fear, and entitled to all that we can want. This is that which hides every spot of deformity, and renders those who are found
in

in it, amiable and lovely ; such as God justifies, and is pleased with, and will set open the kingdom of glory to.

2. *A righteousness inherent.* This takes in a *renovation* of nature by being born from heaven ; and then a *conversation* becoming the gospel, call'd a *conversation in heaven*, Phil. i. 27. *A putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. and so from a heart principled with grace, a walking before God in newness of life. This righteousness is necessary to our seeing God, upon a twofold account, viz.

(1.) *From the establishment of the word.* The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, *righteously and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 12. So looking for that blessed hope. Follow holiness, ----- without which, no man shall see the Lord.

(2.) *From the nature of the thing.* 'Tis strongly asserted by our Lord himself ; *Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3. As to the New Jerusalem, there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth. New hearts are for a new heaven, and they that are otherwise could find no work or satisfaction there : For *what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness*, 2 Cor. vi. 14. What would finners do in the presence of God, with souls most unlike and averse to him ? or in being with Christ, whom they here rejected, and have no interest in ?

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The former *righteousness*, that of Christ, is the price of heaven, and that for which the believer is to expect it : The latter is the way to heaven, mark'd out for the *ransom'd of the Lord to walk in* ; and in doing so, *they shall come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away*, Isa. xxxv. 8, 9, 10. Both perhaps are included in those solemn passages of our Lord saying, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, Mat. vi. 33. *For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God*, ver. 20. He that has no regard to a *righteousness inherent*, overlooks the design of Christ's undertaking and death ; who gave himself for us, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. He that hopes to see God without a *righteousness imputed*, forgets that he is a fallen creature, *to be saved by grace, thro' faith*, Eph. ii. 8. and so, *tho' the wages of sin is death ; the gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23.

IV. *To whatever degree God may bring down heaven, in the discoveries of himself to his people here, there is much more reserv'd above, which they are aspiring to, and shall at last obtain.*

Several things are carried in this, which can be little more than named.

I. 'Tis the sense of such as belong to God, that they have so much of happiness or heaven begun, as they see, and know, and enjoy of God, graciously shewing himself to them, so as not unto the world.

Him

Him they are studying in his works, and word, and Son : him they are seeking from duty to duty, in the closet and sanctuary. And when he is pleased to meet their enquiries, and as it were, place himself before them, saying to any in his family, “ Contemplate my perfections, “ my wisdom, power, faithfulness and love ; “ and know, that thou hast an interest in all. “ Think of the ransom that I have found ; the “ design I have been carrying on for the saving “ sinners ; my appointing my son to be the captain of their salvation, and making him perfect through suffering, in order to it ; and “ know, that all this is for thee. View the “ covenant of grace established in his blood, the “ exceeding great and precious promises it contains ; the relations in which I stand to all “ mine ; and read them as all belonging to thy “ self. I am God all-sufficient, and thine, and “ will deal with thee as such : all my ways shall “ be mercy and truth towards thee ; my loving-kindness will I not take from thee ; I will “ pardon thy sins, subdue thy corruptions, hear “ thy prayers, supply thy wants, assist thee in “ thy work, keep thee in thy way, never leave “ thee whilst in this world, and after all receive “ thee to glory in another.” For God to speak thus to any, and cloath his words with power and efficacy, making the soul to feel the sweetness of them, may well be reckon’d and spoken of, as heaven begun.

2. *Something of this, God has been pleased to vouchsafe to his people here.* He has not, as to this, wholly left himself without witness ; tho’

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the instances of late, since the apparent decay of the power of godliness, have been more rare. We here walk by faith, not by sight; and yet we read of some, who, tho' short of vision, in *believing* have rejoic'd with a joy *unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. An aged minister had the consolation of God so strongly pour'd into his soul, that he was led to put up this petition, "Lord, *Stay thy hand*; thou knowest I am but "a clay-vessel, and can hold no more." Good old *Simeon*, with Christ in his arms, blesses God, and sings, *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. Another, a little before his departure, as if with *St. Stephen* he saw *heaven open*, breaks forth in a rapture, saying, *Friends, farewell! and let it be preach'd at my funeral, That God deal-eth familiarly with men*. The *secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*: And that it may be the more regarded, the most gracious condescension is introduced with the most majestick preface: *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*, Isa. lvii. 15.

The intercession of Christ is always to be supposed, as opening a way to this; thro' whom it is that God will in very deed dwell with men: and this being suppos'd, the farther reasons of his peculiar manifestations to his children, may be such as these:

(1.) The

(1.) *The strength of his love* ; which, though it will not fully pour out itself upon them 'till they come to heaven, is too ardent wholly to refrain by the way.

(2.) To keep them from fainting, whilst put to wait for the glory to be revealed ; and enable them the better to bear the difficulties of an expecting state.

(*Lastly,*) That from experience of God's gracious dealing with themselves, they might more earnestly invite strangers into a special relation to him. This the *Psalmist* does, *O taste and see that the Lord is good ; blessed is the man that trusts in him*, Psal. xxxiv. 5.

3. *Much more of heaven is yet reserved.* It doth not yet appear what we shall be : and no wonder ; For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

It must be something vastly above what the believer hath in hand ; that the love of God travell'd with from everlasting ; that infinite wisdom was employed to contrive ; that the blood of his son went to purchase ; that he is gone before to make ready ; and the bestowing of which, is for ever to redound to the praise of the glory of his grace. 'Tis a happiness unspeakably great, but *reserved*, among other reasons, for these two, viz.

(1.) To wean them from the present world, where they do not find, and are not to expect, their perfect rest ; and so to excite their desires

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after a better, and reconcile them to the thoughts of going hence, even by *dying*, to enter upon it.

(2.) That they may have the quicker relish of their final blessedness; and so their joys and praises rais'd to the highest pitch, when from a state of so much imperfection and distance, they are call'd up to see the *King in his beauty*, God in his glory, of which the one half could not possibly be told them by the way.

4. *This is what they are aspiring to, breathing after*: and this from the *command* of God upon them; from the grace of God within them; as their *hearts* are already *in heaven*, because their treasure is there; from the *joy* they have had, when a ray from the most excellent glory has been let down upon their souls; and the most sensible *grief* it has given them, that their brightest minutes have been so short, &c. Upon these, and many other accounts, they can't but long to be *there*, where they shall be above all imperfection and change. In that *city, that hath no need of the sun or moon to shine in it*: for the *glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*; and in that light the *nations of them that are saved, shall with the highest satisfaction, walk and dwell*, Rev. xxi. 23.

(Lastly,) *What they are aspiring to, they shall at length obtain*. Verily, there is an end, and their expectation shall not be cut off. This may be firmly concluded, as the death and intercession of Christ shall not be in vain: Now he *died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*; 1 Pet. iii. 18. and as going to heaven, made this request, extending to every believer,
Father,

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, John xv. 24. The promise of God cannot fall to the ground; and eternal life is what God, that cannot lye, promised before the world began, Tit. i. 3. The purpose was early; and how often, and many ways hath it been confirm'd since? That in the immutability of his counsel, the heirs of promise may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them, Heb. vi. 18. Their breathings after it are of God's own exciting, and so shall not be disappointed; their meetness for it is the work of a Deity, and shall not be lost: *He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given us the earnest of the spirit, which infers and secures all the rest,* 2 Cor. v. 5. This brings us to the concluding head, viz.

V. *There is a fix'd and proper season for the saint's satisfaction; namely, when they awake, which they will, and ought to have their eye to, and in a becoming manner think and speak of.*

Here I shall at once briefly hint the season pointed to, and how it becomes the saint to think and speak of it.

There is a twofold season in which the heirs of heaven are to enter upon their blessedness there, viz. As to the soul, on their dissolution: as to soul and body united, at the resurrection. To both these, the time of awaking may refer: and so to say, *I shall be satisfied when I awake,* is the same as to say, *when I die, and when I shall rise again.*

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I shall be satisfied *when I awake*, i. e.

1. As to the *soul* on a *dissolution*. The term here us'd, casts a reproach on *life*, or the time of our sojourning in this low, imperfect, mortal state: 'tis a kind of *sleep*. The souls of the best, by means of the *body* of *flesh*, and the *body* of *sin*, are greatly clog'd and hinder'd in their actings towards God, in their perceptions of him, receivings from him, converse with him, and delight and satisfaction in all. On the other hand, it teaches us to alter our language of *dying*, and call it *awaking*: as hereupon, the departing *spirit* is freed from all its incumbrances, and delivered into a far better state; to be nearer God, have that vision of him, and delight in him, which it was never before capable of.

The soul at death does not descend with the body into the silent grave, nor drop into a senseless *sleep*; but being *made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light*, ascends to behold God's face and glory there; in which, sensible of its change so vastly for the better, and thereupon fill'd with love and joy animating the highest praises to God, it may be said to be more *awake* than ever. That which is *death* or *sleep* to the body, is, as to the soul, a freedom from it, an *awaking* to *see* and *live* with God.

And under this notion, it no longer becomes a child of God to think or speak of death with sinking dread and horror, but with *calmness* and *complacency*, as containing what may render it not only tolerable, but amiable, and, when the will of God is signified, for the sake of the blessedness to follow, the matter of his desire.

In

In looking to the body, call *death* a *sleep*, *dying undressing*, or being *uncloath'd*, in order to go to rest: and what is there so horrible in all this?

But as to the *soul*, 'tis to be call'd by another name, that speaks it abundantly better: to *that* 'tis an *awaking*, and this to the best exercise and entertainment, and the greatest gain: to behold the face of God, to look itself into his *likeness*, and so to meet the fullest satisfaction in his light, and love, and glory. Who would not be willing to have the eyes of his body clos'd, so as to be open no more upon this world, to have the eyes of his mind more immediately and always fixed upon God, and his face unveil'd, in the most endearing manner shedding glory and joy through the happy soul. It belongs to them to start at death, and fly from it, who are unwilling to see God, and would be no nearer to him than now: but they to whom death, as to the body, will prove a *sleep*, and this too a *sleep* in *Jesus*, and, as to the departing spirit, an *awaking* to *behold God's face*, have reason to bid it welcome: and when God says, as to *Moses*, *Thou canst not see my face and live*; to answer, as did one of the *fathers*, Lord, *that I may see it, I am willing to die*.

This is a temper becoming a believer, with reference to a dissolution, as in dying out of this world, he is born into a better. That is the first *season* of *awaking*; but it also looks farther, *I shall be satisfied when I awake*, i. e.

2. *As to soul and body united at the resurrection*. Tho' a parting time will come, and the

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night of separation may be long, it shall be followed with a glorious morning and blessed reunion, which will be the beginning of a new life, in which the righteous shall be as happy in both parts, as their finite nature can admit, in being *presented faultless before the presence of God's glory, with exceeding joy*, Jude 24.

Natural sleep is in order to rest, refreshment and rising to advantage: the saint's sleep in death shall not only have an end, but end well. This is denoted by *awaking*. The body shall not be left under an everlasting cover of earth; and when it is brought forth, it shall be with unspeakable improvement; in a far different manner, than when it was put to rest under the clods. How many instances of the happy change are mentioned, to hold our meditation with intenseness upon it, as what is designed, and certain, and will make the day so wonderful, when it comes! The body is *sown in corruption*, but shall be rais'd in *incorruption*: it is sown in *dishonour*, it shall be raised in *glory*: it is sown in *weakness*, it shall be raised in *power*: it is sown a *natural body*, it shall be raised a *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 42. *i. e.* in the highest degree of excellence to which it can be refined, and remain a body still. The power for this is lodged in a proper hand; and the pattern chosen to which it is to be conformed, even that of Christ himself. For this believers have their eyes to him: *We look for a Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to*

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the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

If putting off the body, and going to sleep in death; being laid out for the grave, and laid up in it, to remain under ground, that *land of darkness*, till the heavens be no more, &c. are things of less pleasing sound, *Job x. 22.* nevertheless *the righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 22. Hope concerning the body returning to the dust, that it shall not always be left in a sleepy inactive state, but *awake* at the last day, by being re-united to the soul, that so far as capable, they may both be companions in the blessedness of seeing God, as they have here been in duty seeking and breathing after him. To this holy *Job* directs his faith, and so speaks with an air of joy, even at the mouth of the grave, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; and this, tho' my reins be consumed within me, Job xix. 25, 26, 27.*

The grave shall be no constant bar to the happiness of the body, as death could be none to that of the soul. Both shall find the path of life, and in the appointed season jointly enter upon it. A separation could not be made without more or less of reluctance; as whilst the spirit is to be made *perfect*, and taken to heaven, the body was to be left breathless to the earth, and buried out of sight: but with what mutual joy will they meet at last, when every one that *sleeps*
in

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in *Jesus* shall awake to see *God*, and as to the whole man be happy in him! “Welcome,
 “may the body say, to the soul return’d, thrice
 “welcome to the habitation thou wast once so
 “well acquainted with, and tookest so much
 “pains about, to form and prepare for the felicity we were bid to expect. I find I have
 “been *sleeping* in the dust; *all the days of my appointed time waiting till my change come*: This
 “change, by which I am *redeemed from the power of the grave*, and feel *mortality swallow’d up of life*. In this time, O my soul, how has
 “it been with thee?” To this, with what pleasure may we conceive the soul to answer,
 “O my dear desired companion! I have been
 “well employ’d, happily provided for, since
 “an end was put to our sojourning state. As
 “soon as dislodg’d, I was carried by angels into
 “the third heaven, where I have seen that glory
 “that I could not before conceive, enjoy’d that
 “felicity that I cannot now describe. I have
 “found the truth of what our Lord assur’d his
 “followers at his going to heaven, *viz. That in his Father’s house were many mansions*, and I
 “now bring thee word that there is one for thee:
 “behold, thy Redeemer come according to his
 “promise, to *take all his unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also*. And how well
 “must it be with those that are with him?
 “There we shall dwell in the most glorious
 “light; be fill’d with divine and heavenly love;
 “join with the general *assembly and church of the first-born* in the most delightful work, singing
 “ *blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to*
 “him

"him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever." This is *awaking to satisfaction* indeed, which may well lead the children of the resurrection, in speaking of it, to lift up their heads in token of joy that such a season is coming, their *redemption draws nigh*.

What remains, is the *Application*.

1. *How amiable and great is the change that holy souls have undergone, who are taken up with God in the manner describ'd.*

Naturally they were inclin'd to live without God in the world, as well as others, and take up their rest in lower good; but being born from heaven, they can do so no longer. God is now more to them than all the world; and accordingly to him they are carried by love and choice, as infinitely better. So blessed a turn speaks the *power divine* by which 'tis made, and the persons set apart for God, to be happy in him, whom he hath rais'd to a temper breathing after it, so as to be incapable of satisfaction, if it be not attained.

2. *This may help you to pass a judgment upon all this world, and think of it as it is, namely, as insufficient to be the happiness of a soul.* The wisest and best men on earth have universally renounc'd it, as their portion; and as *taught* of God, have look'd for satisfaction only in himself. What folly then are they guilty of, who yet will seek for happiness below! Which is to seek for light in darkness, life in death: in this they lose their labour, and have their folly aggravated, as all the while in danger of perishing for ever.

3. Do

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3. *Do gracious souls place and seek their satisfaction in God? Let us resolve to have our lot with them.*

If you have not made your choice, let it be no longer deferr'd. *Why should you spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* Isa. lv. 2. When God calls you to *hearken to his voice*, and by Jesus Christ to return to him, that you may be provided of an adequate portion, in which your rest shall be perfect, and your joy full?

Lastly, *What gainers are the righteous by dying, as death is their awaking to see God; and so the way to their highest satisfaction.* In this, love to them should lead us to *rejoice*, even whilst we mourn for our own loss, *John xiv. 28.* as they that are most taken up with God in heaven, are those that we most need, and are best fitted to do good upon earth. But as to *themselves*, they are gone to the Father, to their Father in heaven, to *behold his face* as it is opened there; in beholding of which, they are changed into his likeness, and shine in his beams, and in his light and love are happy indeed, and secure of being unchangeably so. This is that which they prayed, and labour'd, and longed for: this is that which they aim'd at, and were most pleas'd with the prospect of. Whilst others took up with a portion in the present life, they made a wiser choice, and to the last pursued it, often renewing their requests to God, that they might have their felicity *there*, where his *servants* have the honour of the nearest attendance upon him, *and see his face*, Rev. xxii. 4. The promise of this, was that

that which sweetned their lives, and in the *faith* of it, they calmly resign'd their souls at death, and so went up to the world of *light*. And whilst we can look after our holy friends and relations, whom death hath remov'd, and consider them not as lost, but gone to live with God; nearer to him than ever; more happy than ever; perfectly pleas'd and satisfy'd in the presence of his glory, and to change no more; it should be a powerful argument to moderate our sorrows, and invite us to take a part in their joy.

Thus we have abundant reason to think and speak of our dear departed friend, the late reverend Mr. *Sendall*.

It is not my design to enlarge in his character, my acquaintance with him being but of few years; though I could wish it had begun sooner, and that I had been oftner in his company, as I should have been, had I apprehended his stay with us would have been so short. And how much more good might we get by our converses with the saints and servants of God, and lay up for our comfort, encouragement, and imitation? Did we converse more as those that are *dying*, we from them, or they from us, with this thought; *The benefit of their company, it may be, we shall but a little while enjoy.*

Nothing was more obvious than his serious spirit: his words, his looks, his actions in *ordinary life*, evidenc'd him one much taken up with God; bound for heaven, where his treasure was laid up, and accordingly his heart and conversation were there too.

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I understand, God early began to deal with him; rescuing him from the vanity incident to youth, as designing to set him apart for himself.

Deep impressions were made upon him of the evil of sin, the worth of a soul, its danger of being lost, and the necessity and excellency of the Saviour provided; upon which being drawn with the cords of love, he was inabled to fly for refuge to the hope set before him. This he was the more affected with, in that grace towards him was exercis'd with a remarkable sovereignty, taking him, and passing by others, whom upon the account of their nearness to him, he could not but be especially concerned for.

Religion hereupon became his business, and to please God, and live to Christ, and prepare for heaven, what he was most intent upon.

That he might be the more taken up about his soul and eternity, he bent his thoughts to the ministry, and broke through several difficulties and discouragements in order to it; sticking at no pains to fit himself for the work; and afterwards how diligent, how constant, how much in earnest, and unwearied was he in it!

When made *keeper* of the *vineyards*, first in the * country, and then in *this city*, he *watch'd* for souls as one that must give an account, and yet did not forget to keep his *own*, being careful to practise what he preached, as knowing that ministers and people must go the same way to heaven, and desirous to save himself and them that heard him.

* At Canterbury.

Prayer was much of his life, and breath : by which he ask'd counsel of the Lord ; made conscience of applying to him for light, direction, and strength, as to what he was to deliver to you, and for his blessing on all, as sensible that sufficiency and success are entirely of God ; and whatever experience he had of this, he was not unmindful to ascribe the glory where 'twas due, in returns of thanks ; endeavouring, as a christian, and as a minister to keep up a stated intercourse with heaven : And what advantage and comfort did he find in it !

Humility was his cloathing and ornament ; and sincerity what visibly run through his actions, in which he endeavour'd to approve himself to God, and to the consciences of men as in the sight of God.

By a crazy distemper'd body, he was kept mindful of his great change, and the invisible everlasting world, which he was thereby to pass into, and so quicken'd in his preparations for it, and often carried beyond his strength, in preaching as a *dying man* to *dying men*.

How often has he, with difficulty, got into the pulpit ? And yet with what vigour and seriously did he utter himself there ? As one that knew whatever we do for eternity, *should be done with all our might* ; and that it must be *now or never*.

He had made death so familiar to him, that he could speak of *departing*, with the same ease and freedom as one would do of going home. When in the pulpit, he has appear'd greatly spent, and his friends have sometimes

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told him, they were afraid he would have died before he came down; he would, by his answers, signify how far it would have been from being a surprize to him, if he had: so constantly did he stand as one waiting for his Lord.

The *last year* or *two* he was worn down apace, and death had little to do, where grace, and labour, and painful distempers had done so much to facilitate a dissolution.

In the view of this, he considered his flock as in the hand of the Great Shepherd; often using *Jacob's* language, with a good degree of the same faith, to those of his church that came to see him: *Behold I die, but God shall be with you*, Gen. xlviii. 21.

To a minister, and several others, that were with him in his sickness, enquiring concerning the state of his soul, with reference to God and another world; his answer was, *Through grace, I feel no storm, am under no cloud*: adding, *Blessed be God, my work is done, and now I have nothing to do but to die.*

When ask'd by one nearly related to him, what she should do to bear up in a dying hour? observing the pains he was under, he readily replied, as speaking from what he experienc'd, *Make sure of an interest in Jesus Christ, and that will carry you through, as it does me.*

'Twas with the utmost calm, that he ordered all the circumstances of his funeral. By *faith*, like dying *Joseph*, speaking concerning his bones, as knowing whom he had believed, and that Christ was able to keep what he had committed to him; and that of all that the Father had given him,

him, he would lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day.

Under his long sickness, he shew'd an exemplary patience; and tho' wearisom nights were appointed to him, in which he could not lie down in his bed, or long abide there, for many weeks together, he was so far from entertaining a hard thought of God, that he would take all occasions to speak well of him. He was sensible to the last, and shew'd it, by improving every thing to encourage his soul. When taking a little cordial, he would say, *What large draughts of consolation shall I drink in glory!* And looking upward, often repeat the text with new delight, *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness.*

When drawing on, and his fainting pulse and quick breath shew'd him entring the valley of the shadow of death, he signified his inward composure, by saying in a pleased tone, *I am going.* Upon which, had he had strength for utterance, how could he have enlarged, in the prospect of that to which he was so near? "*I am going,*" viz. from earth to heaven, from a vale of tears to a paradise of joy.

"*I am going* to see what I have believed, and possess what I have hoped for; and have my prayers answered, and unconceivably out-done, in what God hath laid up for them that love him.

"*I am going* to a world where there are none sick or sorrowful, pain'd, or die; where I shall live for ever in the vision, and love, and glory of God, and so rejoice for ever: where

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"I shall never lose the glory to be revealed, and
 "never cease to sing to the honour of grace."
 But breath failing, he could add no more; and
 hereupon, laying down his head, he closed his
 eyes upon this world, and went to know what
 that satisfaction means, that consists in beholding
 God's face in another.

*God grant we may be followers of them, who
 through faith and patience inherit the pro-
 mises, Heb. vi. 12. That whenever we are
 called to die after them, we may, by dying,
 awake up into the same glory with them.*

T H E M E T H O D.

TH E text considered, as the language of one in a special
 relation to God: and so five heads of discourse proposed
 from it, viz. pag. 234

- I. 'Tis the genuine temper of a gracious soul, as distinguish'd
 from all the rest of the world, to be taken up with God as
 his chief good. 235

The grounds of this:

1. A settled conviction of the emptiness and insufficiency of
 all the world to do for us as men, or as sinners, what
 we need, or be to us instead of God. 238
2. There is every thing in God to invite and fix a choice
 of him, as infinitely preferable to all the world. 239
3. Grace coming from God, leads to him. 240
4. The children of God have all of them found that peace,
 and some of them that joy in him, which nothing in the
 world beside could give, and which they would not ex-
 change for any thing it can offer. 243
- II. What it is with reference to God, that sums up his people's
 happiness. 247
 - I. Beholding his face: which implies,
 (1.) That God, as the object of his people's happiness, has
 different ways of manifesting himself to them, in a man-
 ner more or less glorious, as he sees good.

(2.) God

The M E T H O D.

(2.) *God will have his people near him, in order to their happiness in him.* 248

(3.) *In this nearness, their eye shall be clear and strengthened for the glorious sight.* 249

2. *His likeness: this considered,*

(1.) *In relation to the object, as it may denote the likeness of God open'd; And this,*

[1.] *In general, as he appears, or displays his glory to the Blessed in heaven, in order to make them so.*

[2.] *In special, as it may point to Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: and hence, to be with Christ, is the same to as to be in heaven, or perfectly happy there.* 250

(2.) *In relation to the subject or beholder; and so it denotes the likeness of God impress'd, glory revealed in us, which is essential to the saint's happiness.* 251

3. *Satisfaction: This, beholding God's face, and his likeness, open'd and impress'd, will make way for, and run into.*

III. *Whoever is admitted to behold God's face, to his satisfaction and happiness, it must be in righteousness.* 253

This includes,

1. *Righteousness imputed; the righteousness of Christ made ours by faith: without which there's no approach to God, or acceptance with him; no title to heaven, or admission there.*

2. *Righteousness inherent; holiness of heart and life, which is necessary to the heavenly felicity, the seeing God.* 255

(1.) *By the constitution of the word.*

(2.) *From the nature of the thing.*

IV. *To whatever degree God may bring down heaven, in the discoveries of himself to his people here, there is much more reserv'd above, which they are aspiring to, and shall at length attain.* 236

Several things included in this; as,

1. *'Tis the sense of such as belong to God, that they have so much of heaven or happiness begun, as they see and know of God, graciously shewing himself to them.*

2. *Something of this in the degree he sees good, God has been pleased to vouchsafe to his people here. The intercession of Christ, that which opens a way to this: which*

The METHOD.

being suppos'd, the farther reasons of the vouchsafement are, 257

(1.) *The strength of that love God bears to his people.* 259

(2.) *To keep them from fainting in a waiting suffering state.*

(3.) *To engage them to invite others to make trial of the ways of God, from the experience given them of his goodness to themselves.* 259

3. *Much more is yet reserv'd.*

Two reasons of the reserve.

(1.) *That saints may be wean'd from the present state, from a standing conviction of its being imperfect.*

(2.) *That from what is here denied, they may enter upon future joys with the highest transport, finding the change so unconceivably for the better.* 260

4. *What is thus reserv'd, they are aspiring to: the springs and motives leading to it.*

5. *What they are aspiring to, they shall at length attain: the grounds from whence it may be concluded sure.*

V. *There is a fixed and proper season for the saint's satisfaction, which they will and ought to have their eye to, and in a becoming manner think and speak of.* 261

The season for this is twofold:

1. *As to the soul, immediately upon a saint's dissolution.* 262

2. *As to soul and body united at the resurrection: the happy meeting between soul and body at that day.* 263

The APPLICATION.

1. *Amiable and great is the change that holy souls have undergone, that are taken up with God as their chief good.* 267

2. *The world insufficient to be the happiness of a soul. This the judgment of the wisest and best, and that as taught of God.*

3. *Let us resolve to have our lot with them who place and seek their satisfaction in God. What is to be done, in order to it.* 268

Lastly, The righteous unspeakable gainers by dying; as dying to this world, is their awaking to see God in the light and glory of a better, and so introductive to the highest satisfaction, that is never to be interrupted, abated, or end.

The

The S U M of Christianity

I N A

C O N F E S S I O N

O F

F A I T H.

By *DANIEL WILCOX.*

Delivered at his Ordination to the
M I N I S T R Y.

The faith *I profess* as *founded upon that which*
was once delivered unto the saints, *I shall en-*
deavour to comprize in the following articles :

I. **F**Orasmuch as the *being* of a Deity is the
foundation of all religion, *I believe*, that
there is *one* only, living and true God, a most
pure and glorious, incomprehensible *spirit*, ne-
cessarily possessing all possible perfections, and
therein the highest, most consummate blessed-
ness; that he is eternal, immense, immutable,
almighty, omniscient, independent; infinitely
holy, just and good; *of whom, and thro' whom,*
and to whom are all things; to whom be glory and
adoration for ever.

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II. *I own and receive the scriptures as the word of God; prov'd by all the reason and evidence the matter requires to come from him. And because he has there reveal'd it, therefore,*

III. *I believe that in the same undivided Godhead, there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; distinguish'd as to order of subsistence, and by their personal properties; the Father begetting, the Son begotten, the Holy Ghost proceeding. That each of them is God most high, and all three but one, the same in substance, and equal in power, eternity, and glory.*

IV. *I believe that in the beginning, from a mere act of his goodness, and for his pleasure and glory, God did by his powerful word create the worlds; making all things of nothing, either absolutely or mediately, visible and invisible, heavens, earth, and sea, with the vast variety of creatures in all; in the space of six days finishing his work, and upon review pronouncing them all very good, as agreeable to his design and will, and instituting the sabbath in commemoration of his rest.*

V. *As to the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, the scripture gives us but a short account. However we read that some of the angels kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, and so rebelling in heaven were expelled from thence, and delivered into everlasting chains of darkness to be reserved to the judgment of the great day. Thus God spared not the angels that sinned. The rest as elect continue the happy attendants of his throne, and as ministering spirits fly to do his will.*

will. *Little lower than these*, as head of the inferior creation, the *last* and *best* of all his visible works, God made man: forming our *first parents* with his own finger, creatures of a *compound* nature, *spiritual* and *material* soul and body; perfectly *holy*, being after his *own image*, but yet in a *mutable* state in *which* he was pleased to hold them for a time on trial, unconfirm'd, to see how they would carry it towards their Creator and King, that they might be dealt with according to their choice.

VI. In this state, as man a *rational creature* is capable of *moral* government, to be mov'd by the springs of hope and fear; God was pleas'd in admirable wisdom and goodness, to cast his law into the most *engaging* form, *entring into covenant* with innocent *Adam*, as the common parent of all mankind, acquainting him with *his will* as the rule of his duty, and thereupon requiring perfect obedience to all his commands, particularly *that* which respected him as an *inhabitant* of *paradise*, and was given as the *immediate trial* of his subjection, viz. *Not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil*. And to shew it his interest as well as duty, death is expressly *threatened* in case of disobedience, which fairly implied the encouraging *promise*, that his persevering obedience should have life and happiness its sure reward: so sure as that nothing but *sin* should deprive him of it. The tender of such a covenant from a *sovereign* to a *subject* had the force of a law, to which consent was *immediately due*; and as a law of kindness, man could not, without the

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charge of *rebellion* and *blindness* to his own advantage, have refused.

VII. *I believe* that in that early transaction between God and man, *Adam*, as it seem'd good to *his* maker and *ours*, contracted in the name of *his* offspring, and so as the *natural* and *moral* head of the whole race, continuing innocent and righteous *himself*, a holy nature had been deriv'd to *us*, but *if he sinn'd* we were to be depriv'd of it, and liable to the same misery with him.

VIII. *I believe* that our first parents hearkning to the suggestions of the *Devil*, one of the *angels* that had before *fallen*, by *wilful* transgression soon broke the law of their Creator, and so *fell* too, from their original innocence and glory, into a most deplorable state, drawing all their posterity after them, that through all the ages of time, *in a natural ordinary way*, were to descend from them.

IX. *I believe* that *hereupon* we are conceived and born in sin, having an *hereditary* corruption derived to us instead of *original* righteousness; and, as guilty and deprav'd, are all *by nature* subjected to the threatning of the law, the wrath of God, and power of Satan; expos'd to numberless evils in this life, to certain death, and beyond it to an everlasting hell.

X. Thus *low* is man sunk! And never able to recover himself, by regaining his holiness, or satisfying justice: and *without blood there is no remission*.

XI. *I believe*, from *all eternity* God foresaw *this*, and resolves not to leave the lost world *inevitably* to perish without help or hope. Viewing

all mankind as bleeding in *Adam*, he out of the corrupt mass will have a *people for his praise*; and to make it sure, how far gone soever, from his mere and sovereign good pleasure and grace, he *elects* a certain number to everlasting life, both as to *end* and *means*, holiness and heaven: and enters into an agreement with the eternal word, by dying to bring about the great salvation.

XII. Immediately on the fall, God was pleased to open the *kind design*, publishing the provided Redeemer under the character of *The seed of the woman*, by whom Satan was to be conquer'd, and our lapsed state restor'd: and from thenceforth deals with man, not according to the rigour of a broken law, but on terms of mercy, for the sake of *Christ's undertaking* afterwards to be performed; who is gradually reveal'd at different periods, to explain and keep alive the memory of the first promise respecting our recovery, and the expectation of his coming in order to its accomplishment.

XIII. I believe in the fulness of time fixt in the counsels of heaven, God so loved the world, that he sent his eternal only-begotten Son, promis'd in the beginning, to accomplish our redemption. As 'twas requisite that the same nature that sinn'd should also suffer, and the children to be redeem'd were partakers of flesh and blood; he also himself likewise took part of the same, that being *Emmanuel*, God with us, he might be a most suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. Though in the form of God, and without robbery equal with him, by amazing condescension he became man; assuming the human nature, soul and body, into a personal union

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union with himself; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin *Mary*, and born of her without sin; having his name sent from heaven, *Jesus*, the Saviour, who is also *Christ*.

XIV. *I believe* him to be the true and promised *Messiah*, and that there is no other to be looked for than he that was born at *Betlehem*, and appear'd in the world about *seventeen hundred years ago*: In whom the scriptures are fulfill'd, the types and shadows answer'd, and *who bath the words of eternal life*.

XV. *I believe* that whilst on earth, he was *holy, harmless and undefiled*; never did the least iniquity, nor was *guile found in his mouth*. A perfect example of sinless obedience, *fulfilling all righteousness* in his life: and at last, thro' them a-llice of Satan, and wickedness of men, *according to the determinate council and fore-knowledge of God*, he was brought as a *Lamb to the slaughter*, cut off, *but not for himself*, dying on the cross in our room and stead, and so offering himself without spot to God an atoning meritorious *sacrifice*, to satisfy divine justice, redeem us from the curse of the law, unbar the treasures of grace, and make way for mercy to reign, *in bringing many sons out of this lost world to glory*.

XVI. Being dead by a *real* separation of soul and body, to compleat his humiliation he is also buried, his body entomb'd, *tho' he saw no corruption*, whilst he goes in spirit to the world of spirits, remaining for a time in a separate state: But as it was not possible for him to be holden of death, the third day he arose again the life and hope

hope of lost sinners, being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. And having after his passion shewn himself alive to his chosen apostles, by many infallible proofs, thro' the space of forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and promising the spirit as their abiding teacher, comforter and guide; he takes his leave of them with a blessing, in their sight ascending to heaven, where he sits enthron'd at the right hand of God, as prophet, priest, and king of his church, and Lord of all: able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

XVII. *I believe that thus it behoved the Redeemer to die, and thus to rise again according to the scriptures, and so to enter into glory: and that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath enacted a covenant of grace, the same for substance in every age, tho' differently administered, and in different degrees of light. That 'tis the last and best edition we are now under, wherein, for the sake of his son, and together with him, he freely offers pardon of sin and everlasting life, to apostate, guilty, perishing man; commanding all, where the gospel comes unfeignedly, to repent of sin, and with the heart to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so return unto God by him, to which, as the transforming energy and aids of his spirit are necessary to incline and draw; to answer all difficulties, this is the kind message he sends to such as are bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.*

XVIII. *I believe that all that thus come back unto God in Christ, are with purpose of heart to*
cleave

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cleave to him, and walk with him, not after the flesh but after the spirit, as holiness is the necessary way to heaven.

XIX. *To this end, I believe that the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, did inspire the prophets, apostles and evangelists, in inditing the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; which therefore are of divine authority, the true and faithful sayings of God, containing what is his good, and perfect, and acceptable will concerning us, and so committed to the church as the standing, only, sufficient rule of faith and obedience, to which all are concern'd and ought to have recourse, to learn the great things they are to know, believe and do, in order to salvation: how to glorify God here, and enjoy him for ever.*

XX. *I believe that, besides the apostles, whose extraordinary office was to cease with them, Christ hath appointed a standing order of men, pastors and teachers, to open and apply the sacred oracles, and administer his ordinances according to his word: preaching the everlasting gospel for the conversion of sinners, and edification of saints: and solemnly separate others to the same office and work, in which he hath promis'd to be with them always to the end of the world, that his saving design may still go on though by different hands, and the deaths of ministers may not prove the grave of the ministry.*

XXI. *I believe God's solemn declaration, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he would turn and live: and is serious in his counsels, exhortations, and whatever means*
he

he makes use of in order thereto. That therefore they will be most inexcusable who finally perish under the gospel, as it is *eminently* the *ministration* of the *spirit*, whose influence, at least in a lower degree, is vouchsafed to all where the word is preach'd, and God withdraws not his spirit from striving with man till resisted and oppos'd, making even obstinate ungrateful sinners a *day*, *wherein to know the things of their peace, before they are hid from their eyes.*

XXII. *I believe* that such is the vanity of man's mind, and corruption of his heart, the power and prevalence of sin and temptation; that, after all the arguments in the gospel, proposed by man in the *clearest* light, and press'd with the greatest *warmth* and *agreeableness* of affection, there is moreover an absolute necessity of the attractive power, and *special supernatural* grace of God, to convert and bring home sinners to himself by his Son, as 'tis *of God* that *any are in Christ Jesus*: that as all that perish must charge their destruction upon themselves, so every soul recover'd, must ascribe his salvation to rich and free adorable grace.

XXIII. *I believe* a divine providence extending to *all the world*, whereby in a most holy, wise, and powerful manner, God continues to rule whatever he has made: that it is *especially* exercis'd towards his *church*, and this by the hand of a Mediator, *as the government was to be upon his shoulders*, and all power is given him in *heaven and earth*, as the reward of his sufferings, and for the ends of redemption.

XXIV.

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XXIV. *I believe that all God's chosen shall sooner or later, be effectually called into a participation of Christ and his saving benefits: this being the father's promise to him, thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, with reference to which our Lord speaks with assurance, all that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.*

XXV. To carry on the chain of salvation, whom God calls he also freely justifies, according to the tenor of the new covenant: pardoning all their sins that are past, whereby till then they are children of wrath even as others; and accepting them as righteous in his sight, by and for the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, upon their believing in him and thereby receiving him as offer'd in the gospel.

XXVI. *I believe that hereupon, they are no more strangers and foreigners, but adopted into the family of heaven, having the power and privilege given them to become the sons of God, and entitled as heirs to the glorious inheritance reserv'd for such.*

XXVII. And because they are sons, God sends forth the spirit of his son to dwell in their hearts, as the seal and earnest of the purchased possession, and to carry on their meetness for it: by this spirit they are sanctify'd in every part, and so freed from the power and reign of sin, and gradually freeing from its sad remains, made a peculiar people unto God, through the mediation of Christ, acceptably to worship and serve him here, in the way to the blissful endless enjoyment of him.

XXVIII.

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XXVIII. *I believe that the just shall live by faith; be kept from total and final apostacy, as the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And they shall be always so to the best purposes, that whom he justifies he may also glorify.*

XXIX. *I believe that christians ought to assemble themselves together for publick worship, on the Lord's-day, according to the example and practice of the apostles and first disciples, and the mind of Christ; in which they may hope for his special presence and blessing, as he has said, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

XXX. Such worshipping assemblies, under a regular pastor, having the word purely preached and ordinances duly administred, are proper churches, and parts of the *holy catholick church*; which, *as visible*, is made up of all that profess the true religion all the world over: Christ's visible kingdom, of which he is only *universal head*, to whom it belongs to give laws to bind the conscience, and appoint officers and ordinances which he will own and bless.

XXXI. *I believe that Christ will always have a church in the world, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, as built upon himself its supporting rock; and to which by the new birth, shall continually be added such as shall be saved: and of the elect thus call'd and sanctified consists the invisible church.*

XXXII. Among whom *I believe the communion of saints*: not only as to external worship and ordinances, but as *members of the same mystical*
cal

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cal body, vitally united to Christ the head, animated by one spirit, even as they are call'd and embark'd in one hope of the heavenly glory, the great scope and end of their calling: Having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all: and as to lesser differences, forbearing one another in love, and endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

XXXIII. *I believe that baptism, and the Lord's supper, are the only sacraments of Christ's appointment under the gospel; to continue in force to the end of time, the initiating and confirming seal of the new covenant, in which covenant all that are competently instructed, and credibly profess their faith and repentance, and so their willing consent thereto, are, by the washing of water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be admitted as visible members of Christ's church; and also in the same manner, their infant offspring, as the promise is to them, and to their children, which is to be done but once. But baptized, adult believers are often to partake of the sacramental bread and wine, the communion of the body and blood of Christ, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; and doing this in remembrance of their Lord, shew forth his death till he come.*

XXXIV. *I believe the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, as to both eternal: That it is appointed unto men once to die, and the business of their lives to prepare for it. That at death, the souls of penitent, persevering believers, being made perfect in holi-*

holiness, do immediately *enter into the joy of their Lord*; whilst the souls of the wicked, that have no part in Christ, are cast into hell, the place of torment, reserved with apostate spirits, to the same judgment.

XXXV. *I believe that God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

XXXVI. In order to which, *I believe that in that day there shall be a resurrection of the bodies of all, both just and unjust, agreeable to the scriptures and the power of God; and all nations and persons shall be gather'd before the tribunal of Christ, as final judge of quick and dead. And tho' the righteous and wicked here live mix'd, he will then divide the one from the other, placing the righteous on his right hand, and the wicked on the left, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. After which, as King, from his glorious throne, he will bespeak his friends on his right hand in the most endearing manner, saying, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. And with a voice like thunder pronounce this dreadful doom on those on the left, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: Upon which execution shall be swift, and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, wrath beyond expression great, and never to end: But the righteous into life eternal, and so shall be ever with the Lord.*

These things, as fetch'd from the *bible*, I again refer to it as our *standing rule*, the *form of sound words* by which all *others* are to be tried, and as far as found in that *word of truth*, and agreeable to it, being the word of *God who cannot lye*, with an unfeigned assent, I say I believe.

And in testimony that I do so, I moreover by a deliberate free consent and choice, take *this God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, to be my God: The *Author* of my being, to be my *reconciled Father*; and *Jesus Christ* for my *Lord* and all-sufficient *Saviour*; the *Holy Ghost* for my *sanctifier, teacher, guide and comforter*; and the *holy scriptures* for the *rule of my faith, desires, and walk*: And repenting of all sin, of nature and life, I likewise devote and give up *myself* to God, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten, to be his *own, his subject, his servant*; to love him above all, and live to him, and for him; resolving in his strength to watch and fight against all the *temptations* of the *Devil, the world, and flesh*, and follow the *Captain* of my salvation in faith and holiness even to the death: *relying* on his sacrifice and intercession, power, and grace, to bring me to everlasting life and glory.

Thus as a *christian* I desire to lay hold of the gospel for my *own* soul; and as a *minister* would not be *ashamed* to *publish* it to *others*, it being the *power of God to salvation to every one that believeth*. In order to this, as *Christ* hath *purchased his church with his own blood*, and will gather and build it by his word and spirit in the mouths of his servants whom

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whom he will call and send; to *him* for the *service* of his *church*, I dedicate my strength, my life, my all, to be employ'd where, and how, and as long as he sees good.

And the Lord grant! *I may find mercy to be faithful* in the *ministry* I am here in the appointed way to receive *from* him, in a sense of the *account* to be given to him; that *after I have preached to others, I myself may not be a cast-away*: But *taking heed to myself, and to my doctrine*, may be able to *give up my account with joy, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming*.

In *his name* I humbly go forth to the *awful* work, on *him* I depend for *assistance, acceptance,* and all my *success*: O my God, Redeemer and Sanctifier! Let my *own* and *bearers* eternal salvation eternally redound *to the praise of the glory of thy grace. Amen, and Amen.*

The CONTENTS *of the several* ARTICLES.

- I. **O**F the Existence of God.
- II. Divine Revelation the Reason of Faith.
- III. Of the Trinity.
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- V. Of Man.
- VI. Of the Covenant of Nature or Works.
- VII. The Extent of that Covenant.
- VIII. Of the Primitive Apostacy.
- IX. Our Misery by the Fall.
- X. Man's utter Inability to recover himself.
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- XII. Of the first Promise of a Saviour.
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- XXXV. Of the Day of Judgment.
- XXXVI. The Transactions of that Day. The Resurrection and final Sentence determining all to their everlasting State.
- Consent to the Baptismal Covenant and Dedication to God and Christ, as a Christian and as a Minister.
- Conclusion.

*The Duty of holding fast the
Form of sound Words.*

Upon the PLAN of the
A S S E M B L Y ' S C A T E C H I S M S ,

A N D

Confession of Faith ;
And fit to Bind with them.

To which is added,

A LIST of the DIVINES in that ASSEMBLY :
The Vow taken by every Member at his
Entrance ; with a Word of their Character.

A S S E M B L I E S C A T E C H I S M ,

Question the Second.

Of the scriptures as our rule.

“ Quest. *WHAT* rule hath God given to direct
“ us how we may glorify and enjoy
“ him ?

Answer. “ The word of God (which is con-
“ tained in the scriptures of the *Old* and *New*
“ Testament) is the only rule to direct us how
“ we may glorify and enjoy him.”

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Q. 1. If the word of God contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is our only rule; are not publick catechisms and confessions of faith useless?

A. No; by no means: tho' the word of God contain'd in the scriptures, be our only rule, to say publick catechisms and confessions of faith fetch'd from the scriptures and founded upon them are useless; is to contradict experience, and offend against the generation of God's children.

Q. 2. Has it been the custom of the churches of Christ to have their publick confessions of faith and catechisms for the use of their ministers and people?

A. It has so; and a good custom it has been, notwithstanding it has been abused by Papists on one side, and is now so much decry'd by Protestants of loose principles on the other.

Q. 3. Is there any thing in the scriptures themselves to countenance such composures, and for a great regard to be had to them?

A. 'Tis St. Paul's express command to Timothy, Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. i. 13.

Q. 4. What in this place may be understood by the form of sound words?

A. The form of sound words may be understood either of the doctrine of the gospel in general, or else very probably of a collection of some of its principal heads, which the apostle had chosen, and put together in the order and dress he thought best; and either preach'd in Timothy's hearing, or drew up in writing, and committed to Timothy as a trust and treasure,
uot

not only for his own use and direction in preaching, but to transmit to others for the use and benefit of succeeding generations in the church of Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The things which thou hast heard of me amongst many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

Q. 5. *Upon what accounts may the apostle call the form of which he speaks, a form of sound words?*

A. 1. In regard of their *nature*, or what they were in themselves: and so *sound words*, are words that are pure, in opposition to any unwarrantable mixture.

2. With respect to their *influence*; and so *sound words*, are words that make sound, or conduce to the health of souls; as of unsound words, such as are not according to the purity of the gospel, we may say the contrary. We read of *sound speech that cannot be condemned*, Tit. ii. 8. And of *words that eat as a canker*, 2 Tim. ii. 17.

Q. 6. *What, by the apostle's order, is Timothy's duty, as to the form of sound words deliver'd to him?*

A. To *hold it fast*, i. e. Having such a form or collection of gospel doctrine, as a pattern for his direction both as a christian and as a minister, not to swerve from it himself, nor, as far as in him lay, suffer it to be corrupted by others; upon no terms to part with it, but firmly retain, and own, and be ready to defend it against all opposition whatsoever.

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Q. 7. Was the injunction given to Timothy only for himself?

A. No; it equally concerns ministers and christians still. What the *apostle* says to *Timothy*, he is to be conceived saying to every one of us, *Hold fast the form of sound words.*

Q. 8. What hereupon may be justly observ'd?

A. That 'tis of great use and advantage both for ministers and private christians, to have the great truths of the gospel cloath'd in sound words, collected together and regularly disposed; and such composures are faithfully and affectionately to be kept; or *held fast in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.*

Q. 9. What may be inferr'd from hence?

A. That it is a justifiable practice of the churches of Christ, to have their publick forms of the fundamental articles of the christian faith, drawn up by the joint labour of their learned and godly divines, after much and solemn seeking of God by fasting and prayer, in the solemn profession whereof they all consent and agree.

Q. 10. Besides the ancient creeds, what instances of publick confessions have been pointed out with approbation?

A. Such are the confessions which most of the reformed churches have drawn up for their own use, comprehending the most necessary and fundamental articles of the christian faith, to be generally owned and asserted by all within their associations and jurisdictions, whether ministers or people.

Q. 11. Among such forms of sound words, which

which for excellency has been most admired and commended?

A. The *confession of faith* which was compiled by the reverend and learned divines of the *assembly at Westminster*, and presented to the two houses of parliament, as their advice in matters of religion, has, by many capable judges, had the first place assign'd it amongst all the confessions of the reformed churches, and their *longer and shorter catechisms* are equally valued.

Q. 12. *For what purposes serve such forms of sound words?*

A. Such forms of sound words are of special use.

1st, For the more easy instruction of the church and people of God in the most concerning and fundamental truths and principles of religion, set together in their mutual connection and dependance, so as to give light and lustre to each other, and beauty and order to the whole.

2^{dly}, To be a test of truth and error, by which doctrines and * men are to be examined and tried, and so a bank to keep out error, and prevent dissentions amongst *pastors* and *teachers*, as well as amongst the private members of the same church, which cannot be avoided or easily

* The church of *Scotland* requires every one admitted into it as a minister, to subscribe the *Assembly's* confession of faith, as the confession of his own, having found its advantage in it as to purity and peace; and the adversaries of that confession shall be attended to, when they say what they would have in its room, or shew it inconsistent with the sacred scriptures, in any of the *articles* they have a quarrel with. In the mean time, *No man having drank old wine, straitway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better.*

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stopt, where there is no common standard of agreement; but every one takes the liberty of holding, and holding forth, what he pleases.

Q. 13. *Upon what accounts is the form of sound words, drawn up by the assembly, in the confession of faith and catechisms, a proper test of orthodoxy and error?*

A. The form of sound words drawn up by the assembly is a proper test of orthodoxy and error, as they assert nothing but what they produce scripture for, and with the greatest strength and clearness prove from thence, appealing all along to the law and to the testimony, the words which the spirit of God teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, 1 Cor. ii. 13.

Q. 14. *But is not the bible or scripture, test sufficient, and the subscribing this, enough to denominate a man orthodox?*

A. 1st, If so, none among the various sects that call themselves christians, could be called or counted erroneous, as they all pretend to own the bible, and will not refuse to subscribe it, and yet retain their various and contrary sentiments when they have done: and so a man may be Protestant or Papist, Calvinist, or Arminian, and no discovery made of him.

2^{dly}, The calling any to the assembly's confession of faith, we by no means take to be a calling them from the scripture, but a putting them to the trial in what sense they understand the scripture; and when any, whom there is reason to suspect of different sentiments, refuses to own that confession, and this in the important articles between the Orthodox and Arminians, he plainly

confirms

confirms that suspicion: and if the doctrine of the *assembly* be consonant to the scripture, and so sound and *orthodox*, 'tis obvious what he is who dissents from it, let him call or count himself what he will.

The Names of the Divines in the Assembly, at Westminster, authors of the larger and shorter catechisms and confession of faith.

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Mr. John White.

Dr. William Gouge.

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 Mr. Adoniram Byfield.
 Mr. John Wallis.

This was such a *body* of men, as it would be hard to find any to exceed: they may be truly call'd the glory of the *last age*; and 'tis to be hop'd will be more admired and followed in times that are yet to come.

If any thing need be added to engage a regard to the *form of sound words composed by them*, 'tis the solemn manner in which they enter'd upon it: every member admitted to sit in the *assembly* making the following declaration, *viz.*

I A. B. do seriously promise and vow in the presence of Almighty God, that in this assembly whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine, but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God: nor in point of discipline, but what may be most for God's glory and the peace and good of the church.

And

And 'tis observable they all join'd till they had drawn up the *confession of faith* and *larger* and *shorter catechisms*, which no incompetent judge * was wont to call *the best book in the world, next the bible*; and accordingly spent a great part of his life in studying, explaining, and applying it. *And blessed is that servant, who when his Lord cometh shall be found so doing.*

* The Revd. Mr. Thomas Doolittle.

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